

No peace without concessions — Peres

AMMAN (J.T.) — The government of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is "under the illusion" of skipping the second redeployment from the West Bank by "jumping" to the final status negotiations, Shimon Peres said Friday. "This is technically impossible," the former Israeli prime minister commented, adding that the Likud government is trying to avoid the implementation of the interim agreement by "bringing in a greater idea, but with non basis." "They [the Likud] claim they achieve peace at a lower cost," but there can be no peace without concessions," he said.

(See story on page 3)

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Army asks for additional \$90m to protect settlements

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AP) — The Israeli army is asking the treasury for \$90 million to set up more watchtowers and guard positions at Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, a spokesman said Friday. The money would come in addition to \$53 million already spent on protecting the settlements after the first Israeli troop pullbacks in the West Bank and Gaza in 1994 and 1995. With the \$53 million, the army bought bullet-proof buses, built fences and paved bypass roads. The new budget request came in response to September gun battles between Israeli troops and Palestinian police in which 80 people were killed. The treasury is studying the request, but at this stage is only willing to contribute \$18 million, the army said.

Police kill three Muslim militants in central Egypt

CAIRO (AP) — Police raided a hideout of suspected Islamists in central Egypt Friday, killing three of them, the interior ministry said in a statement. It said the militants opened fire on a force as it approached the hideout, forcing troops to return fire and kill three — Adel Yahia Sayed Hussein, Yahia Yahia Sayed Hassan and Mohammad Dawoud Abed Salhin. The clash took place in the Bani Saef province some 100 kilometers south of Cairo, the Egyptian capital. The three, according to the statement, were wanted for killing four policemen, two civilians and robbing two banks. Three pistols and 153 bullets were found in the hideout, the statement said.

EU envoy visits Lebanon

BEIRUT (AFP) — The European Union's (EU) special envoy to the Middle East visited Lebanon Friday for talks with government officials and a visit to a Palestinian refugee camp. Miguel Angel Moratinos, who arrived here from Syria, went straight into talks with Foreign Minister Fares Bourez and was scheduled to meet President Elias Hrawi and Prime Minister Rafik Hariri later in the day. On Saturday he will visit the Ain Helweh Palestinian refugee camp, Lebanon's largest, near the southern port city of Sidon. During this visit, the EU adopted a resolution calling on Israel to recognize the right of Palestinians to self-determination and not to rule out the creation of a Palestinian state.

German jailed after shooting Lebanese man

BERLIN (AFP) — A 47-year-old man was sentenced to seven and a half years in prison here Friday after a court found him guilty of attempted manslaughter. The man, whose name was not given, had insulted a Lebanese cook near west Berlin's main railway station in November warning him that he "would be sent home dead in a bag." The defendant, who was drunk at the time, said he was "chasing foreigners who have got nothing to do here," the court heard. The Lebanese was not injured when the man shot in his direction.

Palestinian critically injured in seventh day of Hebron clashes

HEBRON (AFP) — Israeli soldiers shot and critically injured a Palestinian in the head with a rubber-coated bullet in clashes with protesters hurling petrol bombs in the West Bank city of Hebron Friday.

Over 20 protesters were injured by rubber bullets in the seventh day of street melees, in which Israeli soldiers came under a hail of stones and dozens of Molotov cocktails from Palestinian youths, witnesses said.

One protester, Adwan Abu Miall, 21, underwent surgery after he was shot in the head with a rubber-coated bullet which penetrated his skull and entered his brain, the director of Hebron's Al Ahli Hospital, Mazen Al Arafat, told AFP.

Meanwhile, clashes also erupted when Israeli soldiers entered the village of Beit Fajjar south of Bethlehem in pursuit of Palestinian youths who had thrown stones at cars on a road for Jewish settlers between Jerusalem and Hebron.

Palestinians threw stones at the soldiers, who opened fire with rubber bullets, lightly injuring seven youths, witnesses said.

Over 170 Palestinians have been injured, at least five seriously, by rubber bullets during a week-long burst of violence in Hebron which erupted as the freeze in the peace process entered its third month.

In Friday's clashes in Hebron, over 300 Palestini-



A Palestinian firebomb explodes near Israeli soldiers in Hebron, Friday, where street battles between Palestinian youths and Israeli soldiers are continuing for the seventh day (AFP photo)

ans joined the fray in the narrow market streets of the old city below a Jewish settlement at the flashline between the Israeli and Palestinian-controlled zones of the city.

Burning tyres were set in the streets and small fires broke out on the stoops of a number of shops from the large number of petrol-filled bottles thrown by protesters, but the flames were quickly put out, witnesses said.

Many of the protesters had their faces hidden in traditional kaffeya scarves because Israeli soldiers were positioned on the roofs overhead armed with

video cameras to tape the clashes and identify stone throwers for later prosecution.

One youth burned an Israeli flag in front of the troops, drawing a round of rubber bullet fire.

A soldier was reported lightly injured by stones. An AFP photographer was also lightly hurt when he was struck in the chest by a rubber bullet.

Tension has been mounting in the West Bank and Gaza Strip as diplomatic efforts have shown no progress towards ending three months of deadlock over Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, on hold since

mid-March.

Palestinian President Yasser Arafat was to meet Friday evening with his Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and self-rule Palestinian National Authority (PNA) leadership to discuss their next move after a round of talks between Israeli negotiators and Egyptian mediators failed to bring any progress, Mr. Arafat spokesman Marwan Kanafani told AFP.

Egyptian mediator Ossama Al Baz contacted Mr. Arafat Thursday night by phone to fill him in on the results of his talks the previous day with Israeli negotiators in Cairo.

Crown Prince stresses need to overcome peace obstacles

WASHINGTON (Petra) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan on Thursday stressed the need to overcome difficulties facing the Middle East peace process, saying that the present stalemate will negatively affect the efforts made to establish comprehensive peace and stability in the Middle East region.

Addressing the 16th session of the Global Forum, held at Colorado, Prince Hassan warned that present setbacks to the peace process will pave the way for the extremist opponents of peace process to obstruct it.

The Crown Prince said economies and policies of dismay and despair will not contribute to providing the right atmosphere for peace-building, but rather will help create extremists.

Ensuring economic stability and a decent life for citizens are a must for building a lasting peace and stability in the region, Prince Hassan said in his address to the opening session of the Forum, which was attended by senior

international political figures and economists.

He called on economists and business leaders attending the meetings, to study the economic and investment opportunities available in Jordan and the region. Prince Hassan referred to the investment opportunities in the Jordan Valley as economically feasible projects, which can benefit all countries in the region.

Prince Hassan noted Jordan's relentless efforts to establish regional cooperation on solid bases, capable of guaranteeing the rights of all parties concerned.

The Crown Prince emphasised the need for respecting human dignity and providing a decent living and called for placing it on top of international priorities.

Commenting on the Crown Prince's visit to the U.S., Deputy Prime Minister for Development Affairs and Minister of State for Prime Ministry Affairs Jawad Al Anani said the visit was successful by all standards. Dr. Anani said Prince Hassan stressed

during his meeting with U.S. President Bill Clinton the need for finding a mechanism to push the peace process forward, particularly on the Palestinian track.

The Crown Prince suggested that the interim and final status negotiations between the Palestinians and Israel be integrated in a manner that will not affect the legitimate Palestinian rights. Therefore it has been agreed that a white paper be prepared along these lines, to include Jordan's perceptions and ideas on the integration proposal, Dr. Anani said.

Later on Thursday Prince Hassan held talks with United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan and discussed with him issues of concern to Jordan and the U.N., as well as the latest developments in the region. Prince Hassan and the U.N. chief also discussed Jordan's participation in U.N. peacekeeping forces.

The meeting was attended by Foreign Minister Fayez Tarawneh.

U.S. waters down Iraq travel ban proposals to target military only

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) — The U.N. Security Council discussed Friday proposals for an international travel ban targeting the Iraqi military to protest Iraq's continued obstruction of U.N. arms inspectors, diplomats said Friday.

The discussions came after the U.S. delegation, which on Thursday called for diplomatic sanctions against Iraqi government officials and armed forces members, watered down a draft resolution after China expressed serious reservations about the move.

Western diplomats said that the new text called on all governments to bar Iraqi military from their territory.

The original text had also threatened the suspension of the regular two-monthly sanctions review by the 15-member Security Council until the arms inspectors informed the council that Iraq was cooperating fully.

But this was also changed in the new draft, which now provides for the review suspension until the next U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM) report, due in four months' time.

Diplomats feared that China would block adoption of a punitive resolution by wielding its Security Council veto as a permanent member. But diplomats predicted that the Chinese dele-

gation was likely to abstain in view of the latest text, and would not block adoption.

The U.S. delegation would like a vote by the end of the week, but diplomats said that the council may not take a decision until Saturday.

UNSCOM chief Rolf Ekeus on Wednesday demanded a "firm reaction" from the council after Iraqi officials last week prevented his inspectors from visiting military sites.

The draft resolution says that the denial of access on June 10 and 12 was "part of a pattern of non-cooperation by the government of Iraq with the special commission."

Iraq and the U.N. arms inspectors have been engaged in a mounting war of words in recent days as Mr. Ekeus prepares to leave his post at the end of the month. Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz, speaking in Amman on Thursday, accused Mr. Ekeus of having "lied to the Security Council and invented a crisis out of thin air."

Under U.N. resolutions, the international oil embargo in place since the 1990 invasion of Kuwait can only be lifted when UNSCOM certifies that Iraq has complied with U.N. resolutions requiring the elimination of all Iraqi weapons of mass destruction.

Aziz says relations with Syria not to affect business with Jordan

By Tareq Ayyoubh
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz Thursday said that a recent trade rapprochement between his country and Syria will not have a negative impact on Baghdad's trade relationship with Jordan.

"Our (trade) relationship with one Arab country will not affect our relations with another," said Mr. Aziz, who was speaking to reporters following a one-hour meeting with Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali.

He described reports that the newly-resumed trade ties with Syria will harm Baghdad's trade relationship with Amman as "exaggeration and unfounded speculations."

"Iraq has started using the Port of Aqaba as a major hub since 1974. At that time the Iraqi-Syrian borders were open. We were using Syrian and Lebanese ports for our exports and imports and despite this, we were trading with Jordan and using the Port of Aqaba and trucks loaded with goods were travelling between Amman and Baghdad," Mr. Aziz said.

The Iraqi official's comments were in response to a recent trade rapprochement with Syria following a visit by Syrian trade delegation to the Iraqi capital last month.

Last Wednesday, an Iraqi trade delegation ended a week-long visit to Damascus where they discussed importing foodstuffs from

Two ministers boycott Israeli cabinet; vote of no-confidence set for Tuesday

Most Israelis want early elections — poll

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Two ministers boycotted a cabinet meeting Friday to protest Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's handling of the resignation of his popular finance minister, officials said.

Industry and Trade Minister Nathan Sharansky and Integration Minister Yuli Edelstein, both of the Russian immigrant-based Israel Ba'aliya, stayed away from the weekly meeting in Jerusalem.

Dan Meridor, whose resignation from the finance minister's job took effect Friday, was also absent.

"We demand a change in the method of government and respect for promises made to our party on the integration of new immigrants" from the former Soviet Union, said Israel Ba'aliya spokesman Roman Polansky.

Mr. Edelstein gave Mr. Netanyahu until Tuesday to meet the party's demands or risk the party pulling out of

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Most Israelis want early elections after the controversial resignation of Finance Minister Dan Meridor, according to a poll published Friday.

Fifty-one per cent of people questioned said they were in favour of early elections, 45 per cent were against and four per cent had no opinion.

Fifty-four per cent blamed Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for the resignation of popular moderate Meridor Wednesday, according to the poll published in the Yediot Aharanot newspaper.

Another survey in the Masvir newspaper indicated that Netanyahu's left-wing rival Ehud Barak would win if elections were held now.

Forty-two per cent of people questioned said they would vote for the Labour leader, 33 per cent for Mr. Netanyahu and the rest were undecided.

Elections are not scheduled until 2000 but Mr. Netanyahu's right-wing coalition has looked increasingly shaky amid increasing discontent over the premier's autocratic style.

Mr. Netanyahu's increasingly shaky coalition.

"If he does not, we cannot guarantee our support during the vote (Tuesday) in parliament on the motion of no-confidence submitted by the opposition Labour Party," the minister told state radio.

However, party sources said later that intensive negotiations with the government had managed to defuse the crisis. Israel Ba'aliya accounts for

seven of the governing coalition's 66 seats in the 120-member parliament.

Mr. Meridor, a popular moderate from Netanyahu's own Likud Party, resigned after the prime minister pushed a monetary reform he opposed through the cabinet on Wednesday.

Mr. Netanyahu's behaviour, widely seen as a conscious effort to force a potential rival out of the cabinet, provoked

rumblings of discontent within the coalition at his autocratic style.

Most commentators, however, were doubtful that Mr. Netanyahu's government was in any immediate danger.

They noted in particular that Israel Ba'aliya was unlikely to provoke quick elections that could result in the party having fewer deputies in parliament (see story on page 12).

United States stands by aid for Egypt

WASHINGTON (R) — The State Department Thursday stood by its request for more than \$2 billion in aid specifically targeted for Egypt after an influential U.S. Senate subcommittee agreed to a foreign aid package with no money set aside for Cairo.

"Our position is quite clear and on the record as to how we should approach aid to Egypt and Israel and the Middle East Peace and Stability Fund," spokesman John Dinger said.

He pointed to President Bill Clinton's request this year to provide

Egypt in 1998 with \$2.1 billion in economic and military assistance and last week's announcement that Washington was creating a Middle East Peace and Stability Fund that would raise aid to Jordan by \$100 million.

The Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Foreign Operations, intending to send a message of displeasure for Egypt's "emerging ties" with Libya, approved a foreign aid package Wednesday with no money set aside for Cairo.

For the first time since

Egypt and Israel signed the U.S.-brokered Camp David peace accords of 1978, of the two signatories only Israel would be assured of a share in the annual U.S. foreign aid budget.

The panel agreed to provide \$3 billion for economic and military assistance to Israel and set nothing aside for Egypt. Last year Egypt had received \$2.1 billion.

The effort runs counter to the Clinton administration's policy and so would not necessarily mean a cut off of aid. The State Department would be free to provide

aid to Cairo from the rest of the U.S. foreign aid budget.

Mr. Dinger refused to take issue directly with the subcommittee or to agree that the action might send a negative signal at a time when the U.S.-mediated Middle East peace process is in serious crisis.

The subcommittee bill is "a long way from being enacted so I don't want to get into too much detail," he said. The administration clearly expects the aid package will be amended during the legislative process.

Israel asks France to broker peace deal with Lebanon

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israeli Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai has asked France to use its influence with Lebanon to help broker an Israeli-Lebanese peace deal, Israeli Radio reported Friday.

"We hope that France will take advantage of its relations with Lebanon to reduce terrorism and violence so that an accord can be reached between our two countries," Mr. Mordechai told the radio after meeting French counterpart Alain Richard in Paris Thursday.

Mr. Mordechai said France had shown interest in the Israeli proposition. Israel has occupied a

buffer zone in southern Lebanon since 1985 to protect its northern border from attack, and has demanded the disarmament of Iranian-backed Hizbollah guerrillas as a condition for withdrawal.

The Shiite Muslim Hizbollah spearheads Lebanese resistance to the occupied border zone.

Lebanon insists it will only sign a comprehensive peace deal with Israel that includes Syria, the main power broker in Lebanon.

Israeli-Syrian peace talks have been on ice since February last year.

(Continued on page 2)

Lahd threatens to target towns

MARIJAYOUN, Lebanon (AP) — Shaken by the killing of two senior officers in guerrilla roadside bombs, an Israeli-backed militia in southern Lebanon threatened Friday to retaliate against heavily populated coastal cities.

The warning came from Antoine Lahd, commander of the 2,500-strong South Lebanon Army (SLA) militia, who threatened to expand the conflict in southern Lebanon to other parts of the region.

"All villages in Lebanese regions, coastal and mountainous, are within the range of the SLA artillery," General Lahd said during a tour of this Christian mountain town.

"We hope we won't have to stage offensive operations in the future," he added.

Jejjine, 23 kilometres north of Marjayoun — the main town in an Israeli-held border enclave in southern Lebanon — is under the control of the SLA, which is trained, paid and armed by Israel to help its forces to patrol the zone.

On Wednesday, two senior SLA officers, a militiaman and a civilian were killed in bombs detonated on mountain roads at or near Jejjine. The Iranian-backed Hizbollah guerrilla group claimed responsibility for the attacks.

The Shiite Muslim

Hizbollah, or Party of God, has been waging a guerrilla war to dislodge some 1,500 Israeli soldiers and the SLA forces from the enclave.

The main coastal cities of Sidon and Tyre as well as the market town of Nabatieh in government-controlled territory are within range of SLA artillery. Sidon and Tyre have so far been spared the combat in the south.

Israeli warplanes flew during the night over Sidon, south Lebanon's provincial capital, while Israeli helicopter gunships which approached the city from the sea during the night drew some anti-aircraft fire.

Gen. Lahd, after visiting

the scene of the Wednesday bombings and attending a memorial for the slain men, also accused Lebanese government security forces based in southern Lebanon of helping Hizbollah in planting roadside bombs.

If the Lebanese security forces continue to carry out such operations, Gen. Lahd said: "We may have to strike at them and deal with them in the same way."

The Lebanese army has largely stayed out of the Hizbollah-Israeli fighting in and around the enclave, which Israel established in 1985 ostensibly as a "security zone" against cross-border guerrilla raids.



PRAYERS ON CONFISCATED LANDS: Palestinian kid performs Friday prayers with other protesters on land confiscated by the Israeli army to build a road for the Jewish settlers of the Moraj settlement in Rafah City, Gaza Strip. Palestinians in Gaza have been protesting since June 2 against the Israeli settlement policy and the confiscation of Palestinian land (AFP Photo)

Report: Israel's army concluded Lebanon war would be failure

TEL AVIV (AP) — War games conducted by the Israeli army three months before the 1982 Lebanon war determined that an Israeli invasion of Lebanon would not attain its main objective — driving out the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), a newspaper said Friday.

However, the results were never given to then-Prime Minister Menachem Begin and his cabinet ministers, the Haaretz daily said.

In June 1982, Mr. Begin gave the go-ahead to his defence minister, Ariel Sharon, to invade Lebanon in an attempt to crush the PLO's mini-state there.

Haaretz said the general staff found in its simulation games that Israel had only a

very small chance of attaining the strategic objectives defined by Mr. Sharon.

The war games also determined that Israel would lose about 300 soldiers as it neared Beirut, Haaretz said.

The findings contradicted the army's working plan which predicted Israel would only lose a few dozen soldiers in its attack on the Lebanese capital, Haaretz said.

It took Israel three years to extract itself from Lebanon, during which it lost more than 600 soldiers. Israel still occupies a narrow strip in south Lebanon that it patrols along with its ally, the South Lebanon Army.

Sweden illegally exported weapons to S. Arabia — report

STOCKHOLM (AFP) — The Swedish government broke the law in approving the export of weapons parts to Saudi Arabia in 1995, according to a weapons export researcher for the Swedish Peace Organisation Svenska Freds.

In an editorial Friday in the Swedish daily Dagens Nyheter, Henrik Westander said, "the government approved a large direct export of war material to Saudi Arabia, worth 150 million kronor (\$19.2 million)."

Weapons sales to the Middle East are strictly forbidden by Swedish law because it is a conflict region.

According to Mr. Westander, the Swedish government in 1983 exported 100 Boz anti-radar systems to the British government for its Tornado planes.

In 1986, Stockholm agreed to allow Britain to sell 12 Tornados equipped with this Swedish technology to Saudi Arabia, but on

condition that there would be no follow-up orders.

The article claims that the Swedish government in 1995 approved a British follow-up order for an additional 48 Boz-equipped Tornados to be sold to Saudi Arabia.

Jan Nygren, the cooperation minister responsible for war material export in 1995, refused to comment on the affair, Mr. Westander said.

"Saudi Arabia is a dictatorship and one of the world's most totalitarian states. According to the latest report from the well-respected Freedom House in New York, Saudi Arabia is among the group of 18 countries in the world with the worst 'political rights' and 'civil rights'," Mr. Westander said.

Mr. Westander has been a thorn in the government's side in recent years, accusing Sweden of carrying out illegal arms exports to several countries, including Bahrain, India and the United Arab Emirates.

Iran Foreign Ministry denies that new president backs Mideast peace process

TEHRAN (AFP) — The Iranian Foreign Ministry denied Friday that the moderate president-elect Mohammad Khatami supports the Middle East peace process, which is fiercely opposed by the Islamic republic.

Ministry spokesman Mahmoud Mohammadi said he wanted to correct "wrong impressions" formed by a German MP, Juergen Moelleman, in a meeting with Mr. Khatami during a visit to Iran last week.

"Mr. Moelleman got the impression that the new president supports the so-called peace process. But this is not correct," the

spokesman said, quoted by the official Iranian news agency IRNA.

He did not say where the German MP had voiced his impressions.

"The president-elect clearly stated his position in this respect in his first interview with the international and domestic media on May 27. No one got such an impression," Mr. Mohammadi added.

"He stressed on the fact that Iran's reasonable policy with this regard would not change," he said.

Mr. Khatami said in the interview five days after his landslide victory against a conservative rival in presidential elections that he

was opposed to the U.S.-sponsored Arab-Israeli peace process but pledged not to create hurdles in its way.

Mr. Mohammadi recalled Iran's position that the peace process "does not guarantee the rights of the Palestinian nation and liberation of occupied Muslim land, so Iran did not recognise these talks from the start."

"Israel's recent acts of expansionism and the dead end in the peace talks underline the fact that the occupying regime does not believe in peace," he added.

The Foreign Ministry also rejected reports from the Voice of America (VOA)

radio station that an Iranian official made pragmatic statements during a visit to Jordan this week.

The VOA quoted Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Maleki as saying that Iran's foreign policy would in the future be "based on its national interests, not ideological concerns of the past."

But a ministry spokesman said the "report is in line with this medium's malicious aims."

"Maleki has clearly said, Iran's foreign policy derives from national interest whose base is formed by Islam," he said, quoted by newspapers.

Saudi Arabia to step up oil exports to China

DUBAI (R) — Oil powerhouse Saudi Arabia will supply increasingly import-dependent China with more crude from the second half of this year, Saudi sources and Chinese officials in Saudi Arabia have said.

"An understanding has been reached that Saudi Arabia will supply China with whatever they need starting in the second half of this year," a Saudi source told Reuters.

The pact was sealed in talks in Riyadh and Dhahran between officials from state oil firm Saudi Aramco and Chinese state refiner Sinopec, Chinese and Saudi sources said.

Aramco is already a major supplier to China, supplying it with around 30,000 barrels per day (bpd) though the deal has not specified actual future sales volumes.

China's rapid-fire industrialisation is expected to double the country's crude imports to 50 million tonnes (one million barrels per day) by the year

2000.

Its own output of heavy, low sulphur crude has stagnated, prompting a long-term policy to add to and revamp existing refineries to run off similar crudes from the Middle East.

Supply deals with OPEC-member Iran and multi-billion dollar oilfield development contracts in Iraq and Kazakhstan have been struck by the Chinese government in May and June.

Iran's vice petroleum minister for trade, Ghanimi Fard, said that Tehran would increase its oil supply to Beijing from a current 70,000 barrels per day (bpd) to 100,000 bpd in 1998 and then 200,000 bpd by the year 2000.

Saudi joint-venture investment in Chinese refineries was also discussed but there was no breakthrough in talks which have been ongoing since the start of the decade.

"Discussions continued but there is no final agreement reached yet," the Saudi source said.

Aziz says relations with Syria not to effect business with Jordan

(Continued from page 1)

Syria in line with the oil-for-food agreement, which allows Iraq to sell \$2 billion of oil in return for humanitarian purchases.

The Iraqi government submitted a request to the U.N. to consider the Syrian ports of Tartous and Lathiqiyah among the outlets for Iraq-bound goods.

He confirmed that his country has signed contracts with Syrian businessmen but he said that these contracts were "in line with the oil-for-food agreement."

"We hope our trade relationship with Syria will be restored... but it will not be at the expense of Jordan. It will be an additional one to what already exists," said Mr. Aziz, who left Jordan on Thursday.

The Iraqi official called on the Syrian leadership to forget the differences between the two countries and open a new page in their political relationship.

"In the past, we had problems with this (Arab) government or that. The dangers that we are facing now do not differentiate between Iraqi, Syrian or Jordanian citizens. We have to look into the future without looking back at the complexities of our past and search for a new formula in our relationship," Mr. Aziz said.

"We hope that our trade ties with Syria will develop into a political relationship... but let me say that until this moment, our relationship with Syria is within what has been published and within what our brothers in Syria have declared," Mr. Aziz said.

The Iraqi official lashed out at the chief of the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) that monitors the disarmament of Iraq's mass destruction weapons, Rolf Ekue, and accused the UNSCOM team in Baghdad of spying for the United States.

"Mr. Ekue is fabricating a crisis. There is no reason for that crisis. He sent an inspection team who inspected 40 sites but wanted to enter the political section of our intelligence headquarters which has nothing to do with the mandate of the special commission," he said.

"It is just a spying act because the chief inspector who wanted to enter into that site is an American officer," Mr. Aziz emphasised.

"We cannot allow an American officer to enter the political

section of our intelligence headquarters under the cover of the special commission. We cannot allow the American officer to enter into a unit whose responsibility is the security of the president of the republic," Mr. Aziz said.

"Using American spies under the cover of the special commission is against the spirit and letter of U.N. resolutions. It is against international law. The special commission should perform its work in Iraq in a professional manner and not let itself be used as an espionage instrument," said Mr. Aziz.

He accused the U.S. of being responsible for the recent row between Iraq and the Security Council, because the political siege "enforced against Iraq is shrinking and falling down and what is remaining is the economic siege."

Palestinians protest Romanian use of Jerusalem airport

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — The Palestinian National Authority (PNA) protested Friday to Romania after its foreign minister made use of an airport located in occupied east Jerusalem where world aviation regulations have banned flights.

Romanian Foreign Minister Adrian Severin landed last Saturday at Qalandia Airport, north of Jerusalem, in an area occupied and annexed by Israel along with the city's eastern sector in 1967.

"His landing at Qalandia Airport was a violation of regulations by the International Aviation Organisation

(IAO) which forbids use of the airport, which is located on occupied land," Palestinian Aviation Chief Fawez Zaidan said.

"We call on Romanian aviation authorities to adhere to international rules and not give permission to its aircraft to take off or land at Qalandia," Mr. Zaidan said, quoted by the Palestinian news agency Wafa.

Mr. Severin met with both Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat during a three-day visit.

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PROGRAMME TWO

3:30 Holy Koran
3:35 French Programmes
4:00 Gillene World Sport Special
4:30 Innovation
4:50 Tilt
5:15 Blue Healers
6:00 French Programmes
7:00 News in French
7:30 News Headline
7:35 Hanging with Mr. Cooper
8:00 Magazine Zero One
8:30 Prison
9:10 Time Trax
10:00 News in English
10:30 MacGyver
11:05 Soccer Match

PRAYER TIMES

03:50 Fajr
05:26 (Sunrise) Duha
12:37 Dhuhur
16:18 'Asr
19:49 Maghreb
21:24 'Isha

CHURCHES

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English-speaking Latin Catholics Parish Tel. 614190.

WEATHER
Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology
It will be very hot with 7-9 degrees above the seasonal average. Winds will be northerly. In Aqaba, it will be very hot and seas calm.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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Highway Police843402
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Public Security Department630321
Hotel Complaints605800
Price Complaints661176
Water and Sewerage Complaints897467
Amman Municipality Complaints787111
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Central Amman Telephone Repairs623101
Abdali Telephone Repairs661101
Jordan Television773111
Radio Jordan774111
Water Authority680100

Dr. Ziyad Jghaitim992991
Khalifeh pharmacy985417

Jordan Electricity Authority815615
Electric Power Company636381
RJ Flight Information 08-53200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport 08-53200

HOSPITALS
AMMAN:
Husseini Medical Centre813813/32
Khalidi Maternity, J. Amn644281/6
Akileh Maternity, J. Amn642441/2
Jahel Amman Maternity642362
Malhas, J. Amman636140
Palestine, Shmeisani607071
Shmeisani Hospital669131
University Hospital845845
Al-Muasher Hospital667227/9
The Islamic, Abdali666126/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen777101/3
Al-Bashir, J. Ashrafieh775111/26
Army, Marka891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital602240/50
Amal Hospital674155
The Arab Centre for Heart and

Special Surgery865199
ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital(09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital(09)900560
Ibn Sina Hospital(09)986732
Al Hikam Modern Hospital(09)909990
IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital(02)275555
Greek Catholic Hospital(02)272275
Ibn Al Nafees Hospital(02)247100
AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital(03)314111

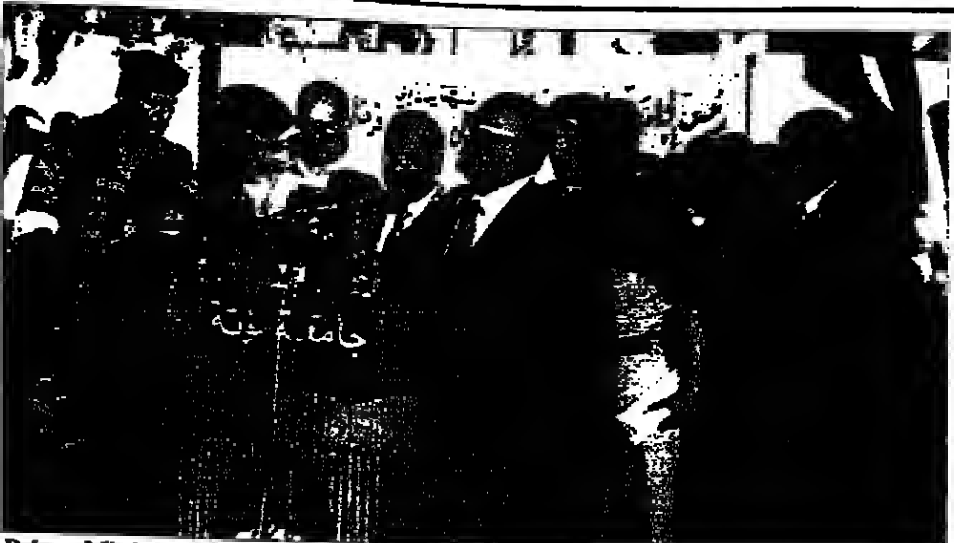
FOR THE TRAVELLER
QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (08)53200 where it should always be verified. Information on other flights is obtained on telephone (08) 52700 or (08) 523250.

ARRIVALS
Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
04:30 Amsterdam, Toronto, Montreal (RJ)
08:05 Damascus (RJ)
09:45 New Delhi (RJ)
10:25 Beirut (RJ)
10:30 Karachi, Dubai (RJ)
10:50 Abu Dhabi, Doha (RJ)
11:00 Colombo (RJ)
15:55 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
17:15 Cairo (OS)
19:10 London (RJ)
17:45 Dhahran (RJ)
00:25 Berlin (RJ)
05:30 Bangkok (RJ)

Other Flights
06:10 Jakarta (GA)
07:05 London, Damascus (BA)
13:00 Riyadh (SV)
13:10 Muscat, Abu Dhabi (GF)
15:05 Vienna (OS)
16:30 Dubai (EK)
20:10 Doha (QF)
21:10 London (GA)
22:15 Paris, Damascus (AF)
23:25 Cairo (MS)
23:45 Beirut (ME)
02:15 London (BA)
03:00 Rome (AZ)

DEPARTURES
Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
06:45 Beirut (RJ)
11:45 Paris, Berlin (RJ)
11:45 Dhahran (RJ)
12:20 Amsterdam, Chicago (BA)
12:40 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
13:00 Geneva, Madrid (RJ)
13:15 Brussels, Amsterdam (RJ)
13:15 Cairo (RJ)
14:05 London (RJ)
21:10 Riyadh, Dhahran (RJ)
21:20 Bombay (RJ)
21:20 Jeddah (RJ)
21:45 Bahrain, Doha (RJ)
22:00 Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)

Other Flights
04:00 Rome (AZ)
04:00 Athens (OA)
06:50 Larnaca (CY)
07:10 London (GA)
08:10 Damascus, London (BA)
14:00 Abu Dhabi, Bahrain (GF)
14:30 Riyadh (SV)
15:50 Vienna (OS)
17:45 Dubai (EK)
17:50 Doha (QF)
21:10 Jakarta (GA)
23:15 Cairo (MS)
23:55 Damascus, Paris (AF)
00:25 Beirut, Amsterdam (KL)
04:00 Rome (AZ)
07:00 Beirut (ME)



Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali Thursday calls for increased Arab solidarity during a commencement ceremony at Muta University (photo by Yousef Allan)

Premier calls for Arab solidarity

KARAK (J.T.) — Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali has called for solidarity among Arab states that they might better handle challenges facing their nations.

"We, in Jordan, will continue to seek Arab unity and end differences and we are proud of our excellent ties with all Arab countries," Dr. Majali said Thursday during a Muta University graduation ceremony. "We look forward to furthering strong ties among Arab countries."

"I would like to emphasize that Jordan does not interfere in the internal affairs of other Arab states as the Kingdom does not desire that any Arab country interfere in its own internal affairs," the prime minister stated.

"In light of present cir-

cumstances, all Arab countries ought to exert a common effort to intensify coordination in order to give shape to the regional order and prevent others from dictating their ideas to us," he added.

In reference to the peace process, Dr. Majali affirmed that "we have faced numerous challenges in our long struggle to achieve peace. We have no other option but to secure a just and comprehensive peace for the benefit of future generations and guarantee regional security and stability."

"We seek to ensure the exchange of land for peace," he added. "This is that which we sought from our peace treaty with Israel which now serves as a model for other parties in the region."

The premier described Jordan as "concerned with those obstacles impeding the peace process and instigated by the Israeli leadership."

"Israeli leaders do not realise that these obstacles will undermine all peace efforts and ruin all achievements [heretofore] reached," he said.

He said that Jerusalem as part of occupied Arab land, should remain a symbol of peace and be returned to Palestinian sovereignty if such a peace is to be lasting and successful.

At the ceremony, attended by Minister of Higher Education Munther Masri and other officials, Dr. Majali distributed certificates to the 1,867 graduates of whom 292 completed post-graduate studies.

Former Israeli prime minister addresses press conference, leadership programme

By Francesca Ciriaci
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Though consistently attempting to obstruct the peace process, the Likud has lost its ideology and its raison d'être as a "territorial right party," former Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres asserted Friday.

As Israel's right-wing party, the Likud was committed to the motto: "Not one refugee nor one inch of land to the Palestinians." But the Likud's "commitment, raison d'être, ideology, suffered the first coup with the sealing of the Hebron deal," under which the Jewish state redeployed its troops from the West Bank city last November, Mr. Peres maintained.

"The minute [the Likud government is] ready to be satisfied with 50 per cent of the West Bank... once it is a matter of percentages, it is no longer a matter of ideology," he said.

In the new age of science, technology, and mass media information, the "irreversible march of peace" will "change the Middle East, and the new Middle East will change the Likud," Mr. Peres, on a one-day visit here, told reporters in a press conference.

Commenting on storms currently hitting the Likud — Israeli Minister of Finance Dan Meridor

Wednesday quit the Netanyahu government and the opposition Labour Party called for a vote of confidence to be held next week — Mr. Peres described the Israeli government's situation as "very dangerous."

The Likud government is trying to develop an agreement with the opposition over the vote of confidence, scheduled to take place on Tuesday.

"They might reach an agreement, but they have lost confidence," Mr. Peres commented.

To avoid fulfilling his



Former Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres speaks with HRH Prince Ra'd at the University of Jordan in Amman. Mr. Peres, addressing students at the U.N.-related International Leadership Academy programme, stated that he was not happy with the current pace of the peace process (photo by Yousef Allan)

country's obligations as stipulated by the Oslo accord, hardliner Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is demagogically proposing to "skip" the interim agreement and "jump" to final status negotiations, the former president of Israel's Labour Party lamented.

In September, the second phase of Israeli troop redeployment from the West Bank is due, and Mr. Netanyahu labours "under the illusion of offering a permanent solution to avoid the second redeployment," Mr. Peres asserted.

Also in September, the redeployment deadline will approach and the United States will abandon its current temporary "wait-and-see" approach of "careful prudence" to play a more active role in the peace negotiations, he added.

Rejecting the thesis that the United States is "withdrawing from the peace

process," Mr. Peres praised a recent Egyptian initiative to put the peace process back on track and urged the European Union (EU) to exert more efforts to allocate "necessary industrial support" to the Palestinians.

"The Palestinians cannot face two crises, a political and an economic one, at the same time," he told reporters, calling on the EU to assist the Palestinians' "industrial parks" projects in Gaza and the West Bank.

Earlier Friday, Mr. Peres delivered a lecture at the international leadership programme currently convening here under the auspices of the United Nations University/International Leadership Academy.

"We are now at a crisis [point] in the peace process," he told participants in the programme, adding that "no organisation, no government and no political party can stop the irreversible march of

peace," though "they can slow it down, or postpone it."

Strongly criticising the Netanyahu government for "claiming that it can get peace at a lower cost," Mr. Peres maintained that "there is no lower-cost peace, there is no peace without compromise and concession."

"In war, one does not have any alternative other than winning, and people applaud [those] who win," he stated.

"In peace, one does not have any alternative other than compromising, but who will ever applaud [those] who compromise?" Mr. Peres asked.

Recalling the main turning points in the peace process, he described his personal experience as a major actor in the peace process as "very sad."

Witnessing the late Israeli President Yitzhak Rabin's assassination in November

two years ago, "returning 450 villages and seven cities to the Palestinians, coping with the bombings in Tel Aviv and in Jerusalem, and losing the elections," in May of last year (when the Likud government took office) "was not a happy experience," he said, but added: "I have no regrets," and reiterated that "to terminate the [Arab-Israeli] conflict will remain on the agenda of the Labour [Party]."

Mr. Peres called for the realisation of an "economic triad" between Jordan, Palestine and Israel" as well as the transformation of the Jordanian-Israeli border "into a land of opportunities."

Together with the project of a joint international airport, first proposed during the Jordanian-Israeli peace negotiations but never realised, Mr. Peres mentioned the ambitious "Red Sea Riviera" project, meant to comprise the Red Sea port cities of Eilat and Aqaba into a single tourist attraction, and proposed that "Jordan buy oil from Saudi Arabia and sell it to Israel in exchange for electricity."

Answering a question regarding his stand vis-à-vis the refugee issue, Mr. Peres did not deny that "many Israelis would object to the return of Palestinian refugees [to their homes]," and urged "new ideas" and "fact-finding [missions], to establish how many, and where [the Palestinian refugees] are."

"We are in the middle of the lake," he concluded, describing the current stalemate in the Arab-Israeli peace negotiations. "Let us not swim back, because with the same energies, [instead of returning to the beginning], we could reach the other side."

International symposium to cover Jordanian political system

By Hind-Lara Mango
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — An international symposium covering "Politics and the State in Jordan" is scheduled to take place at the Institut du Monde Arabe in Paris on June 24 and 25.

The symposium will cover Jordanian political life in the half century between 1946 and 1996.

According to the Centre of Studies and Research on the Contemporary Middle East (CERMOC) and Institut du Monde Arabe, both of whom are organising the event, the focus of the meeting will revolve around the political life and functions of the state.

Issues to be discussed pertain to the political functions of the state, economic development and welfare. Another topic concerns political parties and the various factions which embody the political elite in Jordan.

At the opening session, the consolidation of King Hussein's ascendancy and the international dynamics of the regime are to be discussed. Tareq Tell, researcher and coordinator of the Jordan programme at

CERMOC, will cover the consolidation of Hashemite power in Jordan during the time period 1954-1967. The international dynamics of the regime will be presented by Assistant Professor at the Department of Political Science at the University of Toronto, Paul Kingston. Dr. Kingston will focus on Britain and the politics of modernisation in Jordan during 1945-1958.

Lamia Radi, researcher at the Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques in Paris, will present a paper outlining the relationship between the Palestinian people and the King during 1950-1993.

On the second day of the seminar, Jordan's external relations and the peace process will be main themes. This will be followed by a round-table concerning Jordanian-Palestinian relations. The Palestinian identity in the East Bank, the role of Palestinians in Jordan and their future in light of the Oslo Agreement as well as the peace process in general, will be some of the issues raised at these sessions.

The academic approach at this symposium will rely on

contemporary history, comparative politics and political economy approaches. According to a joint CERMOC and Institut du Monde Arabe statement, scholars participating in this event include Associate Professor at the School of International Relations at the University of Southern California (USC) Laurie Brand. Dr. Brand, who recently published a book on Jordan's inter-Arab relations, will tackle budget security and examine Jordan's foreign policy.

Also covering Jordan's foreign policy, but from a state interest and dynastic ambitions perspective, will be Assistant Professor at the Department of Political Science at Tufts University Malek Mufli.

CERMOC aims to publish the results of this symposium in a volume entitled "Cahiers du CERMOC". This tome is slated to appear in the winter of 1997-1998 to be followed by a second volume documenting a meeting to take place in Amman in 1998. This meeting will trace sociological changes that Jordan has undergone over the last five decades.

Innovative cardiac technique performed in Kingdom

AMMAN (J.T.) — A new non-surgical technique has been performed at the King Hussein Medical Centre-Queen Alia Heart Institute by a Jordanian team over the past three days.

This technique has been heretofore applied in seven other nations.

Headed by Major General Yousef Goussous, director of the Jordan Armed Forces Royal Medical Services, a team of Jordanian cardiologists and technicians performed non-surgical closure of atrial septal defects on seven patients on Wednesday and Thursday.

According to Director of the Public Relations Department at the Royal Medical Services Lt. Col. Walid Abu Taleb, the technique, described as a closure of atrial septal defects (ASD) using amplatzer septal occluder "was applied in collaboration with Dr. Ziyad Hijazi, director of the Cardiac-Catheterisation Lab at Tufts University in Boston."

Until the advent of a new device by the U.S.-based AGA Medical Corp., catheter closure of such defects (congenital communication between the left and right atrium) had been experimental, he said.

"Closure of these defects is now being performed routinely at our hospitals as an outpatient procedure," Lt. Col. Abu Taleb added.

"The device is inserted into the heart via the groin — one part of the device is opened in the left atrium and the other in the right atrium. The major advantages of this new procedure are the avoidance of open heart surgery, less discomfort to the patient, avoidance of scars in the chest and substantial savings when compared to open heart surgery," he explained.

Lt. Col. Abu Taleb described the new device as approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration last month for evaluation in American patients.

He noted that very few countries (Germany, U.K., Greece, Switzerland, Italy and the Slovak Republic) have access to this device.

"We are fortunate to have this device available to us, and Jordan is the first country in the region to have performed this procedure," Lt. Col. Abu Taleb concluded.

U.S. to provide assistance to Jordan regarding intellectual property rights

AMMAN (Petra) — The U.S. administration will provide technical assistance to Jordan in the area of intellectual property rights protection that the Kingdom might join the World Trade Organisation (WTO), according to a senior U.S. official.

In a press conference, held at the U.S. Information Centre (USIS), Peter Fowler, senior advisor at the U.S. Trade Department, Thursday maintained that American experts in intellectual property protection will provide technical assistance to Jordan to help finalise and enforce a previously signed intellectual property rights agreement

to qualify for WTO membership.

As part of the technical assistance package, a Jordanian delegation will visit the United States to obtain information on U.S. legislation concerning intellectual property rights and their means of implementation, Mr. Fowler explained.

He maintained that the implementation of intellectual property rights is necessary for attracting foreign investments and modernising technology.

It is important that investors ascertain that rules and regulations exist for ensuring the protection of intellectual property rights, Mr. Fowler added.

"Rules and regulations on intellectual property rights are obligatory for securing industrial and economic progress, not only in Jordan but every [other part of the world]."

Mr. Fowler, who arrived Tuesday and is slated to stay several days in the Kingdom, stated that the U.S. Congress will commence discussions regarding the aforementioned U.S.-Jordan investment agreement within the next few weeks.

The final endorsement of the agreement depends on Jordan's adoption of the intellectual property rights agreement, he concluded.

Thai delegation arrives to explore investment prospects in Jordan

AMMAN (J.T.) — A six-member delegation from Thailand is scheduled to begin talks today with Minister of Tourism and Antiquities Akel Biltaji and other officials on prospects for Thai investments in Jordan.

The delegation is here at the invitation of the Ministry of Tourism which has made plans for the facilitation of foreign investment in the tourism sector, according to Zuhair Asfour, Thailand's consul general in Jordan.

The delegation is led by Kim Watna, president of

Thai Global, a holding company with more than 20 firms specialising in tourism, and including representatives from the industrial and agricultural sectors.

Upon his arrival Friday, Mr. Watna confirmed that his group would discuss prospects for cooperation in tourism and investment in tourist projects with Jordanian and foreign partners.

A statement from the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities maintained that Thailand expressed interest

in investing in Jordan's tourism sector during its participation in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) economic summit held in Casablanca and Amman in 1994 and 1995 respectively.

The Thai delegation is currently touring Arab and European countries as well as the Palestinian self-rule areas.

Thailand is a main tourist destination in Southeast Asia, attracting more than seven million visitors annually and earning more than \$10 billion each year.

WHAT'S GOING ON

GUITAR RECITAL

* Guitar and lute recital by Omar Bashir and Ziyad Al-Awsi at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

* Works by Nasser Al Nasser at Institut Cervantes, Jabal Amman, until June 30.

* Paintings by contemporary Iraqi artists entitled "Ecology and Environment in Iraqi Art" at the Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts, until July 12.

* Works by Abdul Basit Naqqash and Sa'd Hussein entitled "Heritage and Culture" at the gallery of the Jordan Plastic Artists Association, Jabal Weibdeh, until June 21.

School construction plan estimated to cost \$106.2m

AMMAN (Petra) — The cost of a five-year school construction plan has been estimated at \$106.2 million, according to Director of the Educational Technologies Department at the Ministry of Education Ghazi Momani.

Fifty per cent of this sum will be financed through grants and loans, he added.

Mr. Momani described the plan as stipulating the construction of central schools with all necessary facilities to serve sparsely populated areas as well as new school buildings in accordance with a new construction design, set to reduce construction costs by 10 per cent.

The plans also provides for the construction of sanitary units in schools and comprehensive maintenance in existing school facilities.

Mr. Momani noted a decrease of almost 27 per cent in the number of rented schools between 1988 and 1997.

He explained that in the scholastic year of 1987-1988 rented schools accounted for 48 per cent of total government schools, but that in the scholastic year of 1996-1997 this figure dropped to 20.7 per cent.

The percentage of those studying in rented buildings dropped from 39.6 per cent to 12.4 per cent in the same period, he added.

The number of schools working on a double shift basis dropped from 15 per cent in 1988 to 5.5 per cent in 1997, according to Mr. Momani.

To improve the academic environment, Mr. Momani affirmed that the ministry has furnished these schools with audio visual aids, computers and laboratories.

The ministry also constructed and furnished vocational training workshops as well as sports halls open throughout the year, he concluded.

Jordan Times facsimile 696 183

Cambodian 1st premier hopes Pol Pot will be captured alive

ANG SNUOL, (R) — Former comrades-in-arms of hated Khmer Rouge strongman Pol Pot were preparing a final assault against him Friday and hoped to capture him alive, Cambodia's first prime minister said.

Prince Norodom Ranariddh said Mr. Pol Pot was boled up in a northern Cambodian jungle with 15 other people after a break-away group of his fighters rejected his offer of surrender, he said.

"They finally know where he is and will make a final assault today in the hopes we will be able to capture Pol Pot alive," Prince Ranariddh told reporters.

"I have heard clearly this morning that Pol Pot offered to surrender, but the forces around him don't want him to surrender," he told reporters in Ang Snuol, 20 kilometres southwest of Phnom Penh at the opening of a religious meeting hall.

But Prince Ranariddh's

co-premier and political rival, Hun Sen, dismissed the report that Mr. Pol Pot might be captured alive as a political ploy.

"This is a political game," Mr. Hun Sen told reporters. He said all top Khmer Rouge leaders should be arrested and imprisoned.

The premiers, who share power in a rocky coalition formed after U.N.-sponsored polls in 1993, appear to be heading for a showdown over policy toward the rebels.

Prince Ranariddh's royalist FUNCINPEC party wants to strike a deal with more moderate elements in the crumbling guerrilla force, a move that Mr. Hun Sen sees as a threat to his strength in the run-up to polls next year, political analysts said.

Mr. Hun Sen has branded all contact with the Khmer Rouge as illegal and told Prince Ranariddh earlier this week to choose between working with him in

their coalition or joining the rebels.

Prince Ranariddh said Mr. Pol Pot must be captured and brought to trial and would not be allowed to surrender.

"There is a great difference between surrender and capture," Prince Ranariddh said when asked why the forces opposing Mr. Pol Pot would not accept his surrender. "Surrender means we have to give Pol Pot safe conduct. We have to capture him alive."

Prince Ranariddh said Mr. Pol Pot's former comrades had been cautious in their hunt for him because his mountainous jungle position was protected by landmines and they also feared Mr. Pol Pot might take his own life.

"They are very cautious; if they make any military assault he would be killed (or) he would commit suicide," he said.

Mr. Pol Pot should be taken alive and put on trial

for the death of more than one million Cambodians during his 1975-79 "killing fields" rule, he added.

"As I have said many times, send him to an international tribunal," Prince Ranariddh said.

Mr. Pol Pot fled north from Anloog Veng earlier this month after executing his defence chief and 11 of his family members. Other members of the Khmer Rouge at Anloog Veng pursued Mr. Pol Pot and a small core of loyalists who fled with him.

Prince Ranariddh said any suggestion that Khmer Rouge dissidents could establish a provisional government was out of the question.

"They can't have a provisional government, it is not acceptable," he said. "They have to recognise only one king, one head of state, one government."



Cambodia's co-Premier Prince Norodom Ranariddh runs away from journalists as he arrives at Phnom Penh airport to welcome Queen Norodom Monineath Sihanouk. Prince Ranariddh said Khmer Rouge guerrilla strongman Pol Pot had not been found, contradicting a radio report saying he had surrendered. He said most of Pol Pot's supporters had deserted him and were now trying to capture him and bring him to justice, so far without success (Reuters photo)

Tajikistan backs Pakistani peace bid for Afghanistan

DUSHANBE (AFP) — Tajikistan voiced support Friday for a Pakistani initiative to convene an international conference under U.N. auspices in Islamabad to try to resolve the Afghanistan conflict.

Pakistani Foreign Minister Gohar Ayub Khan, currently on a tour of Central Asia, discussed the Afghan crisis with Tajik President Emomali Rakhmonov here Friday.

Later Tajik presidential spokesman Zafar Saidov told reporters that Mr. Rakhmonov "fully supports the idea of such a conference, and Tajikistan proposes that a ceasefire be introduced in Afghanistan before it is held."

Mr. Saidov stressed that the warring factions in Afghanistan should first reach a peace agreement "without outside interference."

Mr. Ayub Khan said the rival Afghan factions should be joined at the Islamabad conference by officials from Pakistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Iran.

Pakistan is one of only three countries to have recognised the Taliban Islamic militia as the legal government of Afghanistan.

Mr. Ayub Khan said that in Taliban-controlled areas "there is no unrest, while the areas bordering on Tajikistan and Uzbekistan are volatile."

"We are in favour of an inter-tribal meeting in Afghanistan. The crisis can only be resolved peacefully, and through all the clans being represented in the government."

"The Taliban are a real force, and must be recognised as such," he added.

The former Soviet republics in the region, along with Iran and Russia, continue to recognise only the former Afghan government of Burhanuddin Rabbani, who was toppled last September.

Other attempts have been made by Iran, Kyrgyzstan and Turkey to resolve the Afghan crisis through an international meeting in recent months.

Each failed, either because the Taliban refused to accept the presence of rival factions at the table.

In Tehran Tuesday, Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif discussed the Afghan crisis with Iranian President-elect Mohammad Khatami, and both called on the warring factions to stop fighting and seek a negotiated settlement.

Mr. Ayub Khan and Mr. Rakhmonov also discussed Tajik-Pakistani economic projects, including plans to build rail and road links via Afghanistan, and a gas pipeline which would stretch from Turkmenistan to Pakistan via Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, Afghan opposition forces Thursday bombed the Kunduz Airport they had earlier lost to the Taliban Islamic militia after heavy overnight fighting close to the Baghlan provincial capital, sources in northern Afghanistan said.

Baghlan, 265 kilometres from Kabul, is

beld by local Commander Bashir Baghlani, who earlier defied an opposition demand to disarm a large Taliban force that had taken refuge there.

A joint opposition force, led by ethnic Uzbek General Abdul Malik, launched an attack under cover of heavy bombardment Wednesday against Mr. Baghlani's troops.

The opposition fighters pushed Mr. Baghlani's Hezb-i-Islami a short distance back from their front lines towards Baghlan City, the sources said.

North of Baghlan City, the airport in neighbouring Kunduz province was bombed and shelled by opposition factions Thursday morning, they said.

The provincial capital, also called Kunduz, was reportedly captured Tuesday by the Baghlan-based Taliban force with the help of sympathetic local commanders.

Kunduz looks set for a protracted battle between the Taliban, who control two-thirds of the country, and the opposition, mainly based in the north. The battle there will influence the outcome of fighting on front lines north of Kabul, where there has been a relative stalemate for over a week, observers said.

Details about the situation in Kunduz were sketchy, but it appeared the northern anti-Taliban alliance was once again faced with a serious challenge from a resurrected militant Islamic force.

Kunduz province is a patchwork of mixed ethnic groups and political factions, and many local commanders have no fixed ideological loyalties.

Nominally under the authority of ex-President Burhanuddin Rabbani, who was ousted from Kabul by the Taliban in September 1996, the province had a reputation for lawlessness that the local administration could not control.

Mr. Rabbani's political ally, Rasool Sayyaf of the Ittihad-i-Islami faction, who was based in the Kunduz district centre of Khanabad, has taken refuge in Taloqan, capital of neighbouring Takhar province, sources said.

Takhar is defended by Mr. Rabbani's Jamiat-i-Islami faction strongman Ahmad Shah Masood, whose native base is the Panjshir Valley far to the south of Taloqan.

Many Kunduz commanders of both Mr. Rabbani and Mr. Sayyaf have gone over to the Taliban, while others — notably Jamiat's Mir Alam who retreated to Imam Sahib on the Oxus River — have remained loyal.

The fate of Jamiat Governor Qari Rahmatullah was not known and Jamiat army Commander Arif Khan has variously been reported as both pro-Taliban and pro-Rabbani.

Mr. Sayyaf's Khanabad base east of Kunduz City was said to be under Taliban control, but to the immediate west of the capital, Chardara centre was reported in the hands of Gen. Malik's Uzbeks.

Burma detains Suu Kyi associates

BANGKOK (R) — At least five close associates of Burmese opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi have been detained by authorities for allegedly smuggling her videotaped speeches abroad, opposition sources said Friday.

The ruling State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) was upset when non-governmental organisations obtained and used a smuggled videotaped speech by Ms. Suu Kyi opposing Burma's inclusion as a member of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), they told Reuters.

ASEAN groups Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore,

Thailand and Vietnam. The block recently agreed to accept Burma as a new member in late July, despite Ms. Suu Kyi's opposition. Cambodia and Laos are to be admitted at the same time.

Relatives and her personal photographer were among those held, a source from Ms. Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy party (NLD) said.

There was no SLORC comment on the opposition's statement.

Cho Aung Than, a cousin of the Nobel Peace laureate, was picked up for interrogation last Friday, while his sister and her husband were arrested a few days later on

the same charge, the NLD source added.

Photographer Ko Suny and Hon Myint, an ageing politician who is related to Ms. Suu Kyi, were arrested two days ago.

"They interrogated Mr. Ko Suny on what kind of pictures he took and how he managed to ship some video out of the country," a close Suu Kyi aide said.

The NLD source blamed ASEAN for the new round of detentions.

"ASEAN will have to bear full responsibility for this because they accepted Burma into the grouping that gives activists nothing but disservice in Burma," the source said.

U.N. approves 45-day extension of Albania force

UNITED NATIONS (R) — The Security Council, with China abstaining, approved Thursday a 45-day extension of the Italian-led multinational protection force in Albania.

All 14 other members of the Council voted in favour of the resolution.

Albania was swept by violence in January when a string of popular "get-rich-quick" schemes collapsed and tens of thousands of people lost their savings.

Lawlessness still prevails in parts of the country and armed gangs imperil security.

Elections are scheduled for June 29.

China also abstained when the Security Council voted on March 28 to authorise the force, which began arriving in Albania on April 15 to protect aid supplies.

It has a strength of more than 6,000 and is empowered, under Chapter VII of the U.N. Charter, to use force in self-defence.

The Security Council, in its latest resolution, extended the force for 45 days beyond the June 28 expiration of its original mandate. The Council said it would then assess the situation.

Speaking before the vote, China's deputy representative, Wang Xuexian, said the U.N. Charter forbade interference in a country's internal affairs.

"We are not in favour of authorising the deployment in Albania of the multinational protection force. We are even less in favour of the expansion of the mandate of the force," he said.

Deployment of the force was a "special measure taken under special circumstances," Mr. Wang said.

Taking into account Albania's request for the mandate's extension "the Chinese delegation will not stand in the way of the adoption of the draft resolution," but the question of Albania could eventually be resolved only by the efforts of the Albanian people themselves, he added.

Ambassador Francesco Paolo Fulci of Italy said the multinational force had been a "constant and highly visible point of reference for the Albanian institutions and citizens, helping to restore a climate of greater trust."

"We are confident that the elections will be a crucial step on the road out of the Albanian crisis and toward rehabilitation and reconstruction. In short, it will be the Albanian people's first step toward taking charge, once again, of their own destiny," Mr. Fulci said.

Accused CIA shooter said to have given confession

WASHINGTON (R) — Mir Aimal Kansi, accused of a deadly shooting spree outside CIA Headquarters, confessed to FBI agents who brought him back to the United States from his native Pakistan, a law enforcement official said Thursday.

The official, who declined to be identified, said FBI agents informed the 33-year-old Pakistani of his right to remain silent or have a lawyer, but Mr. Kansi instead openly discussed the January 1993 shooting, which killed two CIA employees and wounded three others.

Mr. Kansi also gave details of what he did before and after the shooting, discussing how many rounds he had fired from his assault rifle, and how he waited for several hours in a park near CIA Headquarters in Langley, Virginia, before returning to his apartment.

The official said Mr. Kansi even signed a several-page confession while on the U.S. military plane that brought him back to the Washington, D.C., area Tuesday night to face murder charges that carry the death penalty.

The official maintained that Mr. Kansi willingly talked to the FBI agents and that he had not been coerced or pressured.

Mr. Kansi also discussed his motive for opening fire on CIA employees as they waited in their cars to enter the spy agency's headquarters in a remote Virginia suburb, the official said, without giving any details.

However, the official said Mr. Kansi's stated reasons were difficult to understand. Officials previously have not discounted a theory by Mr. Kansi's former roommate in the United States that the shooting was done because of his anger over the plight of Bosnian Muslims in the four-year civil war after the break-up of the former Yugoslavia.

Virginia Commonwealth Attorney Robert Horan,

who will prosecute the case against Mr. Kansi, was angry that a law enforcement official leaked the story of Mr. Kansi's confession.

"If a law enforcement officer gave this information out, then they ought to be fired," he told local NBC affiliate WRC-TV. "It is outrageous to think that someone in law enforcement would say something like this. It is a violation of all the rules with respect to a fair trial."

Senior FBI and CIA officials told reporters Wednesday they believed Mr. Kansi acted alone in the shooting and that he was not part of any extremist conspiracy.

Mr. Kansi has been charged in the Jan. 25, 1993, morning rush hour shooting spree. An intense four-year worldwide manhunt ended early Sunday morning when five FBI agents burst through the door of his hotel room in Pakistan and arrested him.

The FBI had been tipped about where Mr. Kansi, who had been on the FBI's top 10 most wanted fugitives list, would be by Afghan individuals whom they paid, and who had business dealings with Mr. Kansi.

The U.S. government had offered up to a \$2 million reward for information leading to Mr. Kansi's arrest.

The Intelligence on Mr. Kansi's whereabouts had been developed by the CIA while the actual arrest operation was carried out by the FBI, the senior officials from the two agencies said.

A judge has ordered that Mr. Kansi be ordered in jail without bail because he poses a flight risk. Law enforcement officials have said he was caught a flight to Pakistan a day after the CIA shootings.

Mr. Kansi entered the United States in 1991 in New York and a year later applied for political asylum.

Meanwhile, the Pakistani government came under fire Friday for allegedly banding Mr. Kansi over to the U.S. Federal Bureau of

Investigation (FBI).

Political leaders and the press flayed the government for allowing Mr. Kansi to be whisked away to Washington, saying it was a violation of his rights.

Aurangzeb Kansi, a leader of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's coalition partner the Awami National Party, said the "mysterious silence of Pakistan government proved that it failed to protect" Pakistani citizens.

"Without the consent of the government the American aircraft could not have landed on our soil," he said in a statement carried by a Peshawar daily the Frontier Post.

Hafiz Hussain Ahmad, vice president of the fundamentalist Jamiat Ulama Islam and a former senator, also criticised Islamabad for not informing the authorities in southwestern Baluchistan, the home province of Mr. Kansi.

The 33-year-old Pakistani national belongs to a respectable family of a Kansi tribe in Baluchistan.

"We don't know anything about the arrest," a senior government official in Mr. Kansi's hometown Quetta said.

Another daily, The Nation, highlighted there was no extradition treaty between Pakistan and the United States. "Was Pakistan then being extra-courteous to the U.S.?" it asked.

It is yet to be known what role Islamabad played in the arrest which reportedly took place near Pakistan-Afghanistan border, but the "general impression is that the operation could not have been possible without some collaboration by Pakistan," it said.

"Such behaviour from Pakistani authorities sends wrong signals not only to Washington but also to the rest of the world — signals which may suggest that Pakistan can be taken for granted. Quite surprising for a country which prides itself for its sovereignty," The Nation said.

Hemingway Days Festival revived

KEY WEST, (R) — Key West's annual Hemingway Days Festival will be held in defiance of Ernest Hemingway's three sons, who demanded a share of the profits, organisers said Thursday.

"I would like to announce that the demise of the Hemingway Days Festival has been greatly exaggerated," Mike Morawski, curator of the Hemingway House and Museum, said at a news conference.

The announcement is the latest twist in an ongoing battle over the rights to the name and likeness of the late author, who lived in Key West from 1929 to 1940 and wrote such classics as *The Sun Also Rises* and *For Whom The Bell Tolls* in the island town.

Flanked by two past winners of the Hemingway look-alike contest, Mr. Morawski said the 17th annual festival would be held July 24-27, fewer days than the traditional 10-day party.

Hemingway's son, Patrick, said he was disappointed that the Key West festival would continue without the blessing of the family.

"It's unfortunate that they want to run it with the Hemingway name even after Hemingway's three sons have said they'd like to enter into a licensing agreement," he said.

The festival has been the subject of debate since April, when then-organiser Michael Whalton said he would rather cancel it than fight Hemingway's sons, Patrick, John and Gregory, who were demanding 10 per cent in royalties for future festivals and five years' back pay.

The Hemingway brothers, represented by Fashion Licensing of America, Inc., received a trademark for their father's name and likeness in 1992.

In May, Fashion Licensing also sent a request for royalties to the Hemingway House and Museum, which the Hemingways sold in 1961. The house has been a museum and tourist attraction for 32 years.

The corporation that runs the house bought the rights to the festival from Mr. Whalton and decided to fight it out with the Hemingways.

Greenpeace calls for boycott of Amazon timber

BRASILIA (R) — Environmental group Greenpeace has called for an international boycott of timber from the Amazon to counter what it said was Brazil's defence of uncontrolled logging in the rain forest.

"Throughout the years, we have tried to cooperate with the government in the belief that it was serious in its intentions," Greenpeace's Executive Director Roberto Kishinami said.

But Brazil's opposition to stricter controls on the trade in mahogany — one of the most prized and endangered Amazon trees — showed that the government was "internally supporting the interests of loggers," he said.

Brazil Wednesday abstained from a vote at the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) in Zimbabwe to include bigleaf mahogany in Appendix II, a list of species subject to controls by exporting and importing nations. The proposal was defeated.

Greenpeace alleged Brazil worked behind the scenes to ensure it did not pass after the United States, the world's biggest importer of mahogany, and Bolivia, its biggest exporter, dropped their long-standing opposition to inclusion of the timber under Appendix II.

A spokesman at Brazil's Foreign Ministry said he was unable to comment on Greenpeace's allegations. Last year the Brazilian government announced a moratorium on new permits to log mahogany and viola, another threatened hardwood tree.

The trade in mahogany is considered one of the biggest factors behind deforestation of the rainforest. Loggers cut paths through virgin forest to reach the trees and often damage Indian reservations and national parks in the process.

After the loggers are done, settlers use the paths to gain access to the forest, which they clear for grazing cattle.

Mr. Kishinami said the recent purchase of land and sawmills in the Amazon by powerful Asian logging groups meant new measures were needed urgently if the rainforest's biodiversity was to be protected.

He said Greenpeace was not against the existence of the timber industry in the Amazon but said inclusion of bigleaf mahogany under the CITES appendix would have obliged Brazil to take adequate steps to make sure logging laws were observed.



Beijing police talk with demonstrators opposite the Zhongnanhai central city headquarters for the Communist Party and government Friday. About 200 people protesting against housing policies staged a daring sit-in to voice their anger over what they described as unfair housing policies (Renter photo)

Protesters hold sit-in outside China government

BEIJING (R) — Chinese police Friday forcibly dispersed more than 200 people who staged a rare sit-in outside the headquarters of China's Communist Party in Beijing to protest against housing policies.

Dozens of police were deployed to prevent the protesters, mostly middle-aged and elderly Beijing residents, from entering the Zhongnanhai compound of the government and party to voice their anger over what they described as unfair housing policies.

It was the first time Chinese had staged a protest outside the compound in the heart of Beijing since stu-

dents demanding greater democracy held demonstrations outside the dark red walls of China's government in May and June 1989. Those protests were crushed by the army with heavy loss of life on June 3-4, 1989.

Hundreds of police surrounded the protesters from the Guanghua Wood Materials Factory in southeastern Beijing for several hours Friday before forcing them to leave.

Each protester was grabbed by two police and forced aboard a bus as visiting dignitaries emerged in limousines from the tightly-guarded government compound in the

centre of Beijing.

One elderly man tried to get off the bus but was pushed back by police.

A few protesters walked away to avoid being loaded onto the buses. One shouted: "I have no home to go to."

"What crime have we, the people, committed?" Another cried.

Police ordered local residents to return to their homes and urged curious onlookers to disperse.

The demonstrators had sat quietly outside the west gate of the compound, squatting under trees for about three hours, in their daring sit-in to demand the government hear their grievances over

the right to fair housing.

They were angered when their employers in the Guanghua Wood Materials Factory in southeastern Beijing, local property companies and district government officials had all failed to explain why they were denied access to new flats they had been promised three years ago, a factory official said.

The rare protest comes at a time when Beijing is eager to present a facade of stability, with security tight throughout the capital, to avoid any incidents that would mar the smooth return of the British colony of Hong Kong in just 11 days.

Rev. King's son suspects government conspiracy in killing

ATLANTA (R) — A son of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said in an interview broadcast Thursday he believed his father's murder was part of a conspiracy that involved government officials as senior as President Lyndon B. Johnson.

"Based on the evidence that I've been shown, I would think that it would be very difficult for something of that magnitude to occur on his watch and he not be privy to it," Dexter King said in an interview with ABC's Turning Point.

Mr. King said he believed the U.S. government plotted his father's 1968 murder,

fearing the civil rights leader's growing power, and his opposition to the Vietnam War.

Members of the King family and Andrew Young, a former King aide and former U.N. ambassador, called on President Bill Clinton to create a commission to look into the assassination.

The commission should grant blanket amnesty to encourage witnesses to come forward and it should be funded by Congress, they said.

"The idea is not to punish anybody but the idea is to purge the soul of America of this terrible sin," Mr.

Young said.

Separately, in an interview with Emerge magazine, Mr. Young said Mr. King asked him to take a lead in setting up a commission.

Mr. King told ABC he thought the plot was designed by army intelligence officers, the CIA and the FBI.

Asked if he believed the late Lyndon Johnson was part of the plot, he replied, "I do."

Mr. King's theory of his father's assassination is one long espoused by William Pepper, attorney for convicted assassin James Earl Ray.

Mr. Ray pleaded guilty to

the murder in March 1969 and was sentenced to 99 years in prison. But he later recanted, saying he was coerced in order to avoid the death penalty.

Mr. Ray, now terminally ill with liver disease, has argued he was a fall-guy to a shadowy conspiracy.

Mr. King said he believed Mr. Ray was not involved in his father's murder. "I believe and my family believes that this man is innocent," Mr. King said.

Neither Mr. Young nor the Martin Luther King Jr. Centre for Non-Violent Social Change in Atlanta returned telephone calls Thursday.

Massacre probe begins in former Zaire

KINSHASA (AFP) — President Laurent Kabila's reputation as the "liberator" of former Zaire hangs in the balance following the arrival Friday of a U.N. team to help probe mounting evidence his troops massacred thousands of refugees.

The six-member advance team arrived early Friday to prepare the ground for a second group of investigators who will arrive on July 7 to begin the inquiry in earnest.

The arrival of the advance party coincided with a BBC report that its East Africa correspondent had collected "eyewitness accounts" from villagers who told of both local civilians and Rwandan refugees being killed by Mr. Kabila's forces.

The correspondent, Kathy Jenkins, said she was told by several people in one village — which the BBC did not identify — that Kabila's soldiers in April had come looking for Hutu militiamen.

"When they found ooce, they rounded up 15 of the villagers and shot them," she said, adding that the victims included two women and a child.

The Tutsi soldiers had accused the villagers of sheltering Hutu militiamen responsible for the genocide in Rwanda in 1994, Mrs. Jenkins reported.

Human rights groups have also accused Mr. Kabila's fighters of slaughtering Rwandan Hutu refugees as Mr. Kabila's rebel army fought its way across this

vast Central African country and ousted longtime autocrat Mobutu Sese Seko in a stunning seven-month military campaign.

Several reports, including some from those who managed to escape the massacres, have said the "executioners" were speaking in Kinyarwanda, the language spoken in Rwanda, and also that of Tutsis and Hutus living in the former Zaire.

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) authorities, however, have denied the allegations, although between 100,000 and 200,000 Hutu refugees set to return to Rwanda from the DRC are missing, according to a U.N. refugee committee.

In the wake of U.S. media reports that Mr. Kabila had told local officials to cooperate as little as possible with human rights investigators, the U.S. State Department Thursday reminded Mr. Kabila of his promise to help the United Nations probe the killing of Hutu refugees.

Citing Western and Congolese sources, the Washington Post Thursday said Mr. Kabila issued these instructions last weekend during a meeting in Bukavu, capital of an eastern province where much of the killing reportedly took place.

The Post said that Mr. Kabila is under pressure from Rwanda and Uganda to stall the investigation because he allegedly allowed Rwandan and Ugandan troops to butcher Hutu

refugees in exchange for their support in his successful fight to topple dictator Mobutu.

In Rwanda, the former Tutsi rebellion, the Rwandan Patriotic Front came to power in July 1994, after defeating the Hutu army, but the Tutsi victory came too late to prevent Hutu extremists from killing more than half a million Tutsis and moderate Hutus.

Rwandan Tutsi-led authorities, as well as Uganda, have denied the repeated allegations they actively supported Mr. Kabila's troops.

Head of Friday's advance team, Georg Mautner Markhof, a Geneva-based human rights official, told journalists Friday: "I am expecting good cooperation from the new authorities."

Mr. Kabila procrastinated over allowing a U.N. inquiry mission, but, following U.S. pressure, reached an agreement with U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan this month to allow the investigation. Mr. Kabila also said he would cooperate with the team.

Mr. Mautner-Markhof aims to meet all those who might be able to help him with his task, and added that he was waiting for an official programme from the Kinshasa government.

Yeltsin to stay away from NATO Madrid summit

MOSCOW (R) — Russian President Boris Yeltsin will not take part in the July summit of NATO states that is expected to decide on inviting some East European countries to join, the Kremlin said.

A presidential press statement said Thursday Mr. Yeltsin had told a group of journalists from the group of seven countries he would not go to Madrid for the meeting.

Russia, which has signed a deal on special relations with NATO, is opposed to the Western alliance's eastward expansion, saying the move would harm its security interests and push Russia out of Europe.

Mr. Yeltsin had not been expected to attend the Madrid summit, but some speculation both in Moscow and in the West indicated the 66-year-old Kremlin leader might change his mind.

In May, Mr. Yeltsin went to Paris to sign the "founding act" on a new partnership for security in Europe with leaders of the 16-nation Atlantic alliance.

The Russian leader's Communist and nationalist opponents have accused him of selling out to the West.

Secret talks, surging shares mark Hong Kong handover run-up

HONG KONG (R) — Hong Kong's merger with China grew ever closer Friday as a top Chinese official paid a secretive visit to the territory's future leader and "handover fever" sent the stock market soaring.

Lu Ping, China's top Hong Kong policy-maker, slipped in Thursday for several days of talks with Tung Chee-hwa, a former shipping tycoon who takes the helm on July 1 when the territory becomes a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of China.

"They discussed arrangements for the handover ceremony and the ceremony for the establishment of the SAR and the inauguration of the SAR government," Mr. Tung's spokesman Bob Howlett told Reuters.

More than 4,000 VIPs have been invited to the ceremony on the night of June 30 that will mark the end of 156 years of British colonial rule and Chinese shame over Hong Kong.

British and Chinese leaders would probably hold talks hours before the handover but details have not been fixed, a British official in the territory told Reuters.

China's President Jiang Zemin, Premier Li Peng and Foreign Minister Qian Qichen will attend the ceremony, while Britain will be represented by Prince Charles, new Prime Minister Tony Blair and Foreign Secretary Robin Cook.

China's decision to hold another ceremony in the early hours of July 1 to swear in an appointed body that will supplant the democratically-elected legislature has prompted the United States and Britain to boycott the inauguration.

But the diplomatic wrangles seemed to make few ripples on the Hong Kong stock market Friday.

Shares soared into record territory in the morning, fuelled by strength in Hang Seng Bank Ltd. on rumours a mainland company was looking to take a stake in the bank and general enthusiasm over the impending handover, analysts said.

"The central government's policies will not infringe upon the interests of Hong Kong," Foreign Minister Qian Qichen said in a speech published in Thursday's People's Daily newspaper.

"We also hope things will not emerge in Hong Kong that will infringe upon Hong Kong's and the national interests."

Despite the political changes coming in 11 days' time, Hong Kong's economic might is already strongly linked to the mainland — with the annual debate in Washington over China's most favoured nation (MFN) trade status causing anxiety in the territory.

U.S. President Bill Clinton's hard lobbying for renewal of

China's MFN status got a boost this week when the influential House Ways and Means Committee voted to maintain normal trade relations with Beijing. The full House of Representatives will vote on the issue next week.

Outgoing Colonial Governor Chris Patten said Britain was handing over Hong Kong to China in sound condition.

But he told legislators during his last official question time Thursday that he regretted he could not convince Beijing "there was nothing to worry about in Hong Kong."

Britain's official presence in Hong Kong will not disappear altogether with the transition.

London announced that Francis Cornish, now senior British trade commissioner in Hong Kong, would be consul-general after the handover.

In addition, Alan Paul will be London's senior representative to the joint liaison group, a Sino-British diplomatic body handling details of Hong Kong's transfer.

Meanwhile, a pro-China Liberal Party leader Allen Lee said Friday Hong Kong's shadow Provisional Legislature lacks credibility because it is not popularly elected and should dissolve itself as soon as possible.

This interim parliament, taking over when Britain gives Hong Kong back to China in 11 days' time, has been widely criticised by pro-democracy lobbyists here and in Western states.

Mr. Lee sits in both Hong Kong's existing Legislative Council, a body widely viewed as democratic because half of its members are popularly elected, and in the Provisional Legislature, appointed by 400 people hand-picked by Beijing.

"The earlier we dissolve this controversy of having the Provisional Legislature the better," Mr. Lee told reporters at a news conference at Hong Kong's Foreign Correspondents' Club.

"I'm not surprised the level of (public) support is very low... it is because it is not popularly elected."

The Legislative Council will expire at midnight on June 30 when the handover of power ends a colonial interlude of more than 150 years.

The Provisional Legislature, which has been meeting across the border in China, will then become Hong Kong's official law-making body.

Mr. Lee said he would prefer the Provisional Legislature to dissolve in January 1998 after passing a new law on elections but doubted that would be possible because of a need for a March budget.

He set April 1998 as the soonest likely date for dissolution.

South Africa urges travel ban to Brazzaville

JOHANNESBURG (R) — South Africa urged its nationals Friday not to travel to the Congo where French forces are due to withdraw at the weekend.

A temporary truce is in place between troops loyal to the president and a rival faction supporting a former Marxist military ruler following 12 days of fighting in the capital Brazzaville. The

truce officially ends at Friday midnight (2300 GMT).

Pretoria's Foreign Affairs Department said in a statement it viewed the current situation as unstable.

"The South African government advises citizens and residents of South Africa not to travel to the Republic of Congo until a lasting cessation of hostilities has been achieved," it said.

"In the light of the announced withdrawal of French forces, South African citizens and residents remaining in the country are also advised to take all necessary precautions to ensure their safety and to consider leaving the country temporarily."

Pretoria has no diplomatic mission in Congo and has struggled to trace its nationals

working in Brazzaville, but several South Africans have been evacuated with French help.

France, Congo's former colonial ruler, said Thursday it would complete its pullout of 1,250 troops, who had evacuated 5,700 foreign nationals, in the next few days despite pleas from U.N. envoy Mohammed Sahnoun for some to stay.

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Equal treatment

JORDANIAN AMBASSADOR to Tel Aviv Omar Rifai last week sent a letter to Foreign Minister David Levy protesting the Israeli harassment of Jordanian diplomats at the border crossings between the two countries. The ambassador told the Israeli minister that one diplomat was nearly handcuffed by Israeli security during a security check at the border. He continued to say that such harsh treatment also extended to include Jordanian tourists. Rifai, who has sent 20 similar letters to the Israeli ministry of foreign affairs, noted that these measures are a reflection of Israel's total disregard of international standards pertaining to the treatment of diplomats. While Israeli diplomats "don't even have to get out of the car," it is sad to note that Jordanians are increasingly encountering "intrusive and superfluous questions (as well as) discourteous behaviour," Rifai said.

According to the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, to which Israel is party, diplomats are immune to all jurisdiction, criminal or civil, in the state in which they reside and fulfill their duty. The convention stipulates that a diplomat, during the term of his office, is exempt from both criminal and civil jurisdiction in the state of his accreditation.

Since both the 1991 Madrid conference and the 1994 Israeli-Jordanian Wadi Araba treaty, Jordan has been exerting strenuous efforts to make every Israeli diplomat or not, feel as secure and as dignified as he or she would be at home.

Jordan has always believed that peace should go beyond official statements to reflect the goodwill and determination of all parties and ensure smooth relations between peoples.

While we understand Israeli security concerns, we cannot condone its breach of international norms pertaining to the treatment of diplomats. The continuous harassment of Jordanian diplomats not only reflects Israel's security paranoia, but its disregard and disrespect for Arabs altogether.

It is not a Jordanian custom to retaliate with a quid pro quo measure when other states resort to illicit and illegal measures. And while we hope that Jordan will not have to reciprocate Israeli measures, we call on the Israeli authorities to ensure that Jordanian diplomats and citizens be accorded equal treatment to that of Israelis in Jordan.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A WRITER for Al Ra'i Arabic daily hailed the success of HRH Crown Prince Hassan's efforts to secure American aid to Jordan and said that this long awaited economic assistance will no doubt help the country deal with immediate and pressing issues, like poverty and unemployment. Fahed Faneh said that though the \$100 million grant came late, it shows that the United States is appreciating Jordan's stand vis-à-vis the peace process and its role in reestablishing stability in the region. Thanking the United States for its aid to the Kingdom, the writer said that if the aid is to be used to carry out the government-sponsored social safety net programme and to deal with poverty, it will no doubt be felt by the ordinary citizens and will prove to be part of the dividends of peace. He said that having secured internationally recognised borders, restored its water resources and usurped lands through the peace treaty with Israel, Jordan now starts to receive \$100 million in aid for five consecutive years from the United States to help it carry out its development schemes which are essential elements to secure stability and peace in the region.

A WRITER for Al Arab Al Yawm hailed a communiqué issued by the leaders of the European Union, following their summit meeting, as one step towards helping the Palestinians regain their rights. In a bold declaration ending their two-day summit, the 15 European leaders called on Israel to grant the Palestinians a state of their own and urged the Arabs to keep peace efforts alive, noted Marwan Hazin. The writer said that for the first time since Oslo, the Europeans make such a call, urging Israel to recognise the rights of the Palestinians. What is important here, he said, is the fact that the Europeans showed the world that they can by no means continue to support Israel's policies for ever, especially as Israel continues to commit crimes against the Palestinians, with backing from the United States. The Amsterdam declaration was a clear message to the United States which ought to understand that the time has come to halt Israel's illegal actions, force it to comply with the requirements of peace and respect U.N. resolutions.

Jordanian Perspective

U.S. aid to Jordan — recognition of Kingdom's role in the Mideast

U.S. PRESIDENT Bill Clinton's announcement of new aid to Jordan is the latest recognition of the Kingdom's key role in the Middle East and its contribution to peace, security and stability in the volatile region, regardless of its physical size or relatively small population.

As expected, Israel is trying to portray it as its gift to Jordan, by virtue that half the amount is coming from the annual \$3 billion American assistance to the Jewish state. The other half is coming from the \$2 billion package for Egypt.

As far as we are concerned, we definitely go by what U.S. Vice-President Al Gore affirmed, that it is American money and American concern.

Let us recognise that the U.S. has a vested interest in ensuring that peace, security and stability prevail in the Middle East and it found that the framework of the annual aid for Israel and Egypt since 1979 was simply inadequate because of the newfold players in the arena. As such, it is clear that Washington's decision to help Jordan from part of a package that was already available was the best option available. Indeed, it took considerable time for Jordan to secure the additional aid.

U.S. officials have always said that Jordan needed help — Clinton himself has admitted several times that external assistance to the Kingdom was minimal — but little was being done. So Tuesday's announcement fulfills part of that essential requirement which is essential if the international community expects Jordan to be able to maintain its rock-steady position and commitment to peace, security and stability in the region.

From the statements made by Bill Clinton while announcing the creation of the Middle East Peace and Stability Fund at a meeting attended by HRH Crown Prince Hassan, we discern that the assistance could be featured into American aid package for the Middle East for some years.

What is more attractive about the assistance is the flexibility of the aid. Rather than tying it down to military aid — which would mean much scaled down actual impact of the assistance in real terms — Washington has freed it; half of it could be used to support Jordan's fiscal budget and the other for specific development projects.

Despite the relative small size of the aid, when compared with the American assistance to Israel and Egypt, we in Jordan definitely appreciate the gesture, particularly with the clear indication that Washington is equally involved in efforts to convince its friends in Europe and Japan to follow suit. And the opportunity for Clinton to press the issue has presented itself — the G-8 summit next week.

While completely agreeing with the U.S. and others that the aid is indeed very important for us in Jordan, let us not overlook that the long-term economic development and self-reliance of the Kingdom definitely depend on increased industrial activities, trade and tourism. In this context, a new spirit has to be injected into efforts to develop the Jordan Rift Valley — a dream that was given birth as far back as October 1994, when Crown Prince Hassan held the landmark meeting with the then Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres in Washington.

We would like to send a strong message to all concerned — Jordan does not plan to depend on external assistance to sustain itself for ever. We have undertaken dedicated moves to achieve self-reliance, as exemplified in the impressive economic reforms, painful as they are, that we have implemented in close cooperation with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). So it is not simply a case of Jordan expecting the international community to make aid for the Kingdom part of their assistance programmes for the next century; it is simply an issue of extending a helping hand to Jordan while it is seriously grappling with the problem of addressing economic distortions accumulated over decades.

All anyone needs to be convinced of the Jordanian argument is a cursory look at the impressive achievements that the Kingdom has scored in addressing those distortions, whether in terms of bringing down budget deficit, containing inflation, maintaining a healthy economic growth and liberalising trade and industry through shifting the focus to the private sector. The record speaks for itself, and none other than the managing director of the IMF has gone on record to affirm that Jordan has achieved more than the IMF had expected and has set targets that even the IMF felt were difficult to meet.

Indeed, the key objective of building a Jordanian economy that enables us to meet on our own challenges that lie ahead was discussed by Crown Prince Hassan while in Washington. That objective and its links to economic relations between Jordan and the U.S. were the focus of talks the Crown Prince held with the U.S. secretary of commerce, William Daley.

The discussions also covered follow-up work on translating the recently signed agreements on bilateral investments and related features of economic policies between Jordan and the U.S. Again, this is an area where Jordan is proud to have met the criteria laid down by the all-embracing American approach to investment abroad. We do have to go further in terms of Intellectual Property Rights and product quality, but we are definitely getting there.

In a broader context, the Middle East and North Africa economic conference to be held in Qatar this year is as significant as any other forum. It is my sincere hope that the forum would be held as scheduled, regardless of the controversy over Israel's participation. For us in Jordan, as elsewhere where sanity and reason prevail, the fundamental belief is that the best way to deal with issues is to meet them head on. The minimum requirement for that approach is someone to deal with, and keeping Israelis away from Doha is not going to serve that purpose.

THE WEEK IN PRINT

EU declaration boosting current efforts towards attainment of peace

REVIEWED BY
ELIA NASRALLAH

THE JORDANIAN and European efforts to give impetus to the peace process, the situation in the occupied Arab lands, the Syrian-Iraqi moves towards restoration of bilateral relations and domestic issues received prominence in the local Jordanian dailies last week.

Al Ra'i Arabic daily referred to the recent European Union's declaration that supported the Palestinian people's right to a state and said that Europe's fresh moves in this direction coincide with intensive Jordanian endeavours to breathe life into the peace process.

The European declaration, which also called on Israel to comply with the requirements of peace, was timely, in view of the developments in the occupied territories, said the paper.

It expressed hope that the French and U.S. presidents, at their summit, will reach some kind of formula that will put the Israelis and the Palestinians back on the right course of action towards peace.

Al Dustour daily described the European declaration as another step that boosts current efforts towards the attainment of peace and reasserting the Palestinian's rights in their homeland.

The daily said that the Europeans were not only satisfied with supporting the Palestinian rights, their declaration implied condemnation of the current Israeli settlement programmes.

The European declaration, which offers the Palestinians a great moral support, said the paper, is almost similar to the stands of the Arab and Islamic countries with regard to the right of the Palestinians to establishing their own state in Palestine.

Tareq Masarweb, a writer for Al Ra'i daily, said the U.S. House of Representatives, which declared that Jerusalem is the undivided capital of the Jewish state and called for the U.S. embassy to move to the

city, has rewarded Israel for its illegal practices that have been condemned by the whole world.

The U.S. move represented a stab in the back of the Arab order, caused an embarrassment to the Arab parties involved in the peace process and reasserted America's biased attitude towards Israel and its continued criminal actions against the Arab people, said the writer.

The Arab masses have been frustrated not only because the peace process yielded nothing for them but also because the Arab order continues to believe in the U.S. role as a peace broker. It has to be stressed again, said the writer, that without Jerusalem there can be no peace.

Sultan Hattab also dwelt on the U.S. House of Representatives' declaration that Jerusalem is the united capital of Israel by saying that the move has proved to the Arabs that the United States has finally chosen its path and opted for the role of open supporter of Israel's illegal measure and occupation of Arab land.

The writer said that it is to be regretted that the Arab leaders still lack a united stand, have no plan whatsoever to confront the occupation and the hostile American attitudes and are still pinning their hope on America's playing the role of peace mediator.

The Arab governments can take the matter to the United Nations, to the International Court of Justice, to the Vatican and several world organisations to enlist their support for condemning the United States' action and Israel's continued occupation of Arab Jerusalem and the Arab territories since 1967, suggested the writer.

He said that to add insult to injury, Israel has granted the U.S. a plot of land, owned by the Islamic Waqf in Arab Jerusalem, on which to build an embassy, in further defiance of the feelings of millions of Muslims around the world.

A writer for Al Arab Al Yawm said in an article

titled "The coming explosion" that barring a miracle, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip are heading towards an explosion.

Salih Qallab said that Israel's measures against the Palestinians, the deteriorating living conditions of the Arab inhabitants and the deadlocked peace process are sufficient causes for such a development.

The writer said that Israel is driving the Palestinians towards despair and creating the atmosphere for the coming confrontation between the Jewish state and the Palestinians.

Blaming the United States for its failure to contain Israel's ambitious designs, the writer said that the Palestinians had hoped that Bill Clinton would, after being elected for a second term, adopt a fair stand and at least exercise pressure on Israel to pursue the peace process, but their hopes have been frustrated.

The writer warned that U.S. interests in the Middle East are lying on top of a gunpowder barrel that can go off any minute.

Discussing the Iraqi-Syrian rapprochement, a writer for Al Arab Al Yawm said the recent moves between Baghdad and Damascus towards opening free trade exchanges between them has brought delight to the Arab masses although the initial step is confined only to trade.

Taber Adwan said that once the borders, which have been closed for 17 years, are opened again, the road towards political and other exchanges will be paved.

The writer said that faced with the Turkish invasion and the hostile American stand and the Israeli intransigence, Syria had no choice but to turn its eyes eastwards.

He added that Iraq is in need not only of Syria but also the rest of the Arab World to give it backing and support in the face of the overwhelming sufferings its people have been facing, and is in need of all the backing for its endeavours to end the embargo.

The writer said that solidarity between Iraq and

Syria can deter Turkey from sending its army to the Arab country and prevent Benjamin Netanyahu from going ahead with plots against the Arab rights in Jerusalem.

Hilmi Asmar, a writer for Al Arab Al Yawm, discussed the question of rising criminality in Jordan, stressing his belief that the crimes increase in a society that is not satisfied materially or morally.

Citing the recent spate of murders committed in the Kingdom, the writer said that the crimes have economic and social reasons, and instead of dealing with the outcome of the crimes, the Jordanian society ought to address the underlying causes that push people towards committing such actions.

Hunger, unemployment and political and social frustration, as well as the absence of freedom of expression, all combine to create reasons for certain frustrated people to commit crimes.

He called on the government and the concerned institutions to pool their resources towards helping society enjoy security and address its problems in a civilised manner.

A writer for Al Aswaq said that the cancellation of the Ministry of Supply is bound to create numerous headaches for the government, as well as the Jordanian consumers.

Rashid Hassan said that the merchants have benefited from the absence of a government pricing system and promptly hiked the prices of all commodities. At the same time, some of the merchants have been monopolising dealings in certain commodities because there is nothing and no one to deter them from taking such an action.

In the absence of government control, the consumers fall victim to the whims of manipulators and profiteers, said the writer who demanded that the Ministry of Supply be allowed to exercise its role to safeguard the interests of the limited-income groups who form the majority of the Jordanian society.

LETTERS

More space deserved

To the Editor:

I WAS surprised to read the brief "Eight physiotherapists graduate" (Jordan Times, May 18, 1997). The Occupational Therapy College is a pioneer body in the Kingdom that offers this unique training in the Arab Middle East and we do believe that it deserves a more extensive coverage than in the brief section.

Note that occupational therapy is quite different from physiotherapy. The Occupational Therapy College is recognised by the Ministry of Higher Education in Jordan, the Ministry of Health and the World Federation of Occupational Therapists.

Furthermore, the University of Jordan is considering setting up a full rehabilitation college teaching the different specialisations, both occupational therapy and physiotherapy.

Marie-Claire Marroum,
Member of the Board of Governors,
The Occupational Therapy College,
Amman.

Help for the helper

To the Editor:

I HAVE a Filipina domestic worker who was very lucky to escape from an abusive family a year ago. Unfortunately, her sister, who was not as courageous, remained behind. Because of these circumstances I am now aware of how unfortunate some foreign helpers are. If they should be so unlucky as to be placed in an abusive home, there is very little, it seems, that anyone can do.

My helper and her sister arrived in Jordan in March 1996. Since that date, the sister, working for a wealthy, prominent family in Amman, has never had a day off, been paid her salary only once since arriving (\$500 in November 1996), been verbally abused, been verbally threatened, not seen her sister once during this past year and is always locked in the house when the employer leaves, is never allowed to receive phone calls, is never allowed to make phone calls except when she can sneak them.

I have tried, through the Philippines Consulate, to help this girl and another unfortunate Filipina who is working in the same house. After innumerable phone calls and insistence, the consul finally met with the escorted girls in his office at the beginning of May, 1997, where it was agreed that their contract would be terminated at the end of the month. This agreement has, unfortunately not been met. Both girls are still enslaved in this home, living in absolute misery in an abusive environment with no real hope of escape.

Because of the helplessness of these women, I felt impelled to try to help them gain their freedom. Besides many phone calls to the consul, I have discussed their plight with friends and with lawyers, but so far nothing has changed for them. Those friends who have also tried to help have met with no more success than I.

We now ask: Aren't there basic human rights which apply to domestic help, just as there are rights for citizens of Jordan? Isn't there any organisation or advocate for people like these? One can only imagine what kind of impression these women have of Jordan and Jordanians and what kind of stories these women will have to tell their families when/if they finally return to the Philippines.

Is there no way to remedy this situation? I would really like to know how.

Karen Asfour,
Amman.

The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any issue they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication should contain the writer's full name and preferably address as well. Names can be withheld upon request but only under special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing and abridging.

Satellite phone hits mass market after colorful history

By Roberto Coloma
Agence France-Presse

SINGAPORE - War correspondents swear by its reliability. Climbers on Mount Everest depend on it for survival.

Geologists and sailors — even presidents and prime ministers — won't leave home without a satellite phone.

After a colorful stint of duty in conflicts, disasters and expeditions as well as more mundane transport and industrial applications, Inmarsat, the first and only global mobile satellite telephone system, is now reaching a wider market.

The Inmarsat phone is being marketed as the ultimate business tool in its latest incarnation: a mini version as small as a notebook computer and priced at \$4,000, a 10th the cost of older suitcase-size terminals.

With a battery-powered Inmarsat phone and portable computer, one can send and receive faxes and electronic mail or surf the Internet virtually anywhere on earth. Handheld models are expected in the market by 2000.

While they're not exactly as cheap as cellular phones, sales have exploded and mini Inmarsat phones have become toys for the big boys.

"We have a couple of people in the Middle East who bought them to communicate when they go hunting on weekends," Mohamed Al Amin, Inmarsat regional director for South and East Asia, told AFP.

Mr. Amin, speaking at an Asian telecommunication show in Singapore, said Inmarsat is also exploring the lower end of the market. It may set up terminals as solar-powered pay phones in

isolated parts of Asia. "We're now working with India, China, Indonesia and Thailand to actually see if we can implement at least pilot experimental projects in those countries," he said.

Since being launched last December, some 6,000 mini Inmarsat phones have been sold, with another 20,000 to 30,000 expected to be snapped up by the end of 1997. Inmarsat forecasts sales of 50,000 in 1998, with 100,000 terminals in use worldwide by 2000.

Before the mini models, it took Inmarsat about 15 years since services were launched in 1982 to sell 80,000 terminals spanning marine, land and aeronautical applications.

The first-generation Inmarsat land phones weighed 30 kilograms, had external dishes, were priced at up to \$40,000 apiece and only a few years ago cost \$10 a minute to operate. Calls now cost \$3 a minute.

The satellite phone technology was developed by the London-based International Mobile Satellite Organisation, a cooperative with shareholders from 80 countries. Inmarsat itself does not make its phones, licensing the technology to manufacturers and making money from satellite usage.

Originally called International Maritime Satellite Organisation, Inmarsat still draws 60 per cent of sales from marine users. Revenues reached \$369 in 1996, with an operating surplus of \$137 million.

Competition is expected within three years.

"We welcome it," Mr. Amin said. "We have a system which is working today, fully tested, fully operational. We have our

distribution networks all over the world. Our system is being used in 160 countries already."

When the first Malaysians scaled Mount Everest last month, they used an Inmarsat to report their feat to an elated Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad. Journalists covering wars and other crises use the system to file stories and images.

"Most heads of state are actually using an Inmarsat system," Mr. Amin confided. "It's reliable and it's also secure."

From satellites orbiting 36,000 kilometers above the equator, Inmarsat's signal "footprints" are said to cover about 98 per cent of the world's surface and 60 per cent of its population.

According to Inmarsat officials, by 2000 cellular phone networks would only cover 15 per cent of the world's surface and 60 per cent of its population.

With many of these cellular networks unable to "talk" with each other, Inmarsat looks set to be viable for many years to come.



Britain's sea change as damp gives way to drought

By Jo Winterbottom
Reuters

LONDON — Britain's image as an island of mists and drizzle is going through a sea change as the country's worst drought for 200 years dries up supplies and threatens tough curbs on water use.

In the 25 months from April 1995, rainfall in Britain has fallen to the lowest level since accurate records began in the 1850s.

That in turn has dried up reserves in the ground and the Institute of Hydrology has warned that water stocks could be the lowest this century by the end of the summer.

Rivers and streams are drying up, with the effects of the drought compounded by growing demand. Farmers and water firms are forced to draw off increasing water in a process known as abstraction, causing further damage to the environment.

Britain, where rain stopping play is seen as a tradition for summer sporting events, may face bans on the use of garden hoses and the filling of swimming pools this summer as it has during the last two years.

Low rainfall affecting much of Western Europe

The country is not alone in suffering from drought as much of Western Europe is experiencing low rainfall. Germany suffered a damaging drought in March and April while in Italy average rainfall in the Lombardy plain so far this year has been half normal averages.

But Britain takes its rainfall seriously and the new Labour government convened a "Water summit" last month, bringing together

water companies, environmentalists and consumer groups, to thrash out solutions.

First on the government's list was sharp criticism for the companies, privatised by the former conservative government in 1989, for the huge amounts of water which leak out of pipes on the way to consumers.

Estimates suggest nearly 3.6 billion litres of water leak out of pipes daily, with some companies losing 30 to 40 per cent of supplies before it reaches the customer.

"It's (water) not being used efficiently and effectively and what we've got to do is... be quite tough with the industry," Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott told the summit.

The government said it would set stringent mandatory leakage targets for firms and industry watchdog Ofwat will be able to take tough action if these are not met.

The companies claim they have already cut leakage by 454 million litres a day and have invested over \$822.1 million on drought-related measures.

But they have fired public outbursts with soaring dividends and huge pay packets for executives, so-called fat cats, since they have been privatised.

Labour has vowed to levy a one-off windfall tax on privatised utilities to finance a three billion pound programme to cut unemployment and the water companies are in its sights.

But the companies claim that rising demand as the population grows and technology advances cannot be met by leakage control and demand management alone.

They want to build new reservoirs to ensure they will be able to supply customers in the future.

The regulator and the environmentalists are unwilling to consider these claims until other avenues have been explored.

Ofwat's Ian Bryant warned the conference that there would be "no new resource developments... allowed until we are satisfied that leakage is at economic levels and that demand is being properly managed."

"There are already increasing signs of environmental damage," Ed Gallagher, chief executive of the environment agency, told the meeting.

He said high levels of abstraction was leading to fish dying. Some rivers in the south of England have almost dried up.

Britain looks at measures to cut demand

Demand management means a variety of novel ideas for a British public which has until now viewed full water supplies as a fact of life.

Meters for water use are being installed in many new homes and offered free in several areas for those who want them. Some companies want heavy water users — those with large gardens or swimming pools, for example — to be forced to install meters.

The government is not in favour of compulsory metering because of concerns that those least able to pay — on low incomes or large families — could be the heaviest users.

Mr. Prescott, who says he now brushes his teeth in a glass, suggested other measures which could cut demand.

He brandished a "hippo," a blue plastic bag which fits inside the cistern of a lavatory to cut down the amount of water used in flushing.

Average British lavatories use between nine to 13 litres in every flush, according to the National Consumer Council, compared with the United States where flushes of just six litres are mandatory.

"If low-flush loos were installed everywhere, around 10 per cent of domestic consumption would be cut," a spokeswoman for the council said.

Mr. Gallagher suggests Britons take showers instead of baths, have full loads only for washing machines and that they should not wash their hands under running water.

Gardeners are increasingly being persuaded to use bath water to water plants and to replace traditional British varieties with those whose roots stem from Mediterranean lands.

But visions of a Britain bathing in sunshine and fringed with palms may be overdone, experts warn.

The meteorological office is wary of citing climate change for the unusual conditions. "A lot more research is needed," a spokesman said. "Even three years of low rainfall could just be a new extreme, rather than a climate change."

But Mr. Prescott considers the situation to be very serious. "We must recognise we have a major problem... When a pattern repeats itself so often, it ceases to be extraordinary," he told the summit.

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Traders see hamstrung OPEC unable to halt slide in oil prices

LONDON (R) — A sharp slide in oil prices this year should concentrate OPEC minds when ministers gather in Vienna next week for production talks but traders expect few surprises and see further market weakness whatever the outcome.

Global inventories of crude and products like gasoline and heating fuel are rising rapidly and rival producers outside the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) are leaving little room for the group's surplus barrels.

Widespread quota-husting has lifted OPEC output two million barrels per day (bpd) above its self-imposed ceiling of 25.03 million bpd but traders are betting on an extension of current allocations for another six months and little progress on discipline.

"The market assumes they (OPEC) are going to roll over," said Scott Carter, senior oil trader at Tosco Petroleum in London.

More important for short-term price direction would be any news from the Iraqi delegation, led by Oil Minister Amir Mohammad

Rasheed, about when crude exports are likely to resume under the United Nations oil-for-food deal.

The U.N. officially renewed the deal allowing Iraq to sell \$2 billion of oil for another six months from June 8.

Iraqi exports averaged 660,000 bpd in the first six months of the deal — more than the output of OPEC minnow Qatar — but Baghdad has refused to let the proceeds of the first tranche be spent on food and other humanitarian supplies.

This has left oil refineries scrambling around for alternatives, lending temporary support to world prices.

"The Iraq news is essentially much more critical," said Russell Hill, senior crude trader for Austrian oil company OMV in London.

Price bawls led by OPEC's second biggest exporter Iran may want to make an issue out of quota compliance but traders warn that a public showdown could scare markets into further losses.

"The likelihood of a rollover is widely accepted," said Mr. Hill.

"Stocks are heading fast towards 1995 levels, there's a lot of potential for an overhang of oil so there is an argument for OPEC to consider a more aggressive stance but they probably won't," he added.

Benchmark Brent Blend crude oil on London's International Petroleum Exchange (IPE) has lost nearly 30 per cent of its value this year, shedding over \$7 a barrel to trade around \$17.70 a barrel Thursday.

OPEC states are feeling the loss of revenue but traders say prices would have to fall much further before the group would risk igniting a row between core members like Saudi Arabia who stick to quotas and seasoned overproducers like Venezuela.

"From the market's point of view I don't see why OPEC should change the status quo at the moment," said a London-based executive of a national oil company.

The group, founded in Baghdad in 1960 to improve the lot of Third

World oil producers, has lost much of its influence in recent years as most members decided to pump at full capacity.

"The key issue is the policy of those countries over-producing in making efforts to curb overproduction rather than the formal quotas themselves," said Peter Davies, chief economist for British Petroleum.

Oil prices have returned to roughly where they were 12 months ago but instead of a repeat of last autumn's rally which took Brent to a six-year high of over \$25 a barrel, more losses are in store, traders said.

OPEC's own Vienna-based secretariat projects demand for OPEC crude at little more than 25 million bpd in the second half of the year, some two million less than recent actual OPEC supplies.

"OPEC is still trying to hold onto power but it is becoming less and less important in the market," said Tosco's Carter.

"The market is more interested in other factors like Asian demand and new North Sea production," he indicated.

Morocco's economy seen at zero growth in '97

RABAT (R) — Morocco expects its economy to register a zero growth in 1997, down from 11.8 per cent in 1996, due mainly to a serious drop in agriculture output, Finance Minister Mohammad Kabbaj has said.

Mr. Kabbaj, who was briefing reporters on the 1997/98 draft budget, said: "The budget was prepared on the basis of Morocco's economy zero growth of gross domestic product (GDP) in 1997 and a strong growth next year."

This was due to an expected decline of agriculture output to between 3.5 and 4.0 million tonnes of cereals against 10 million tonnes in 1996, due to weather changes, Mr. Kabbaj said.

"Inflation, which will slightly rise to 4.0 per cent from the record 3.0 per cent in 1996 is among the factors behind the country's GDP drop in 1997," the minister said.

The 1997/98 draft law showed the state total budget rose to 126.7 billion dirhams (\$13.5 billion) in 1997/98 fiscal year compared with 117.1 billion

dirhams (\$12.4 billion) in 1996/97.

The 1997/98 total state receipts stand at 114.3 billion dirhams compared with 107.7 billion dirhams in the previous fiscal year.

"The budget deficit stands at between 3.0 and 4.2 per cent of GDP depending on the privatisation receipts," Mr. Kabbaj said.

If the expected 4.0 billion dirhams privatisation receipts are included in the 1997/98 budget, the budget deficit will stand at 3.0 per cent but if excluded it will be around 4.2 per cent of GDP, Mr. Kabbaj said.

In the previous 1996/97 budget, the government planned 5.0 billion dirhams as total privatisation receipts.

"We met the budget target after we sold off majority state stakes in the country's two oil refineries at a total \$419 million," the minister said.

Samir firm and Societe Cberiffenne des Petroles, the sole country's refineries were sold to a Swedish-based Saudi Corral oil firm earlier this month.

"Morocco expects foreign investments to rise at

\$1.0 billion this year from an average \$450 million in 1996," Mr. Kabbaj said.

Among the expected major investors, which the authorities held talks with, he named South Korean Daewoo giant \$700.85 and French tourist group Accor.

Mr. Kabbaj, who showed confidence in Morocco's economy fundamentals and undergoing tight control on financial instruments, said the current account deficit is expected to remain nearly unchanged at 1.0 per cent of GDP in 1997, against 1.1 per cent in the previous year compared with 4.7 per cent in 1995.

He said domestic saving rose to 19.2 per cent in 1996 from 16.9 per cent of GDP in 1995.

"One of our main concern and long-term target is to downsize Morocco's foreign debt, which represents a heavy burden for the economy, to 40 per cent of GDP by the year 2001," Mr. Kabbaj said.

Estimated at \$21 billion, Morocco's foreign debt represents 59 per cent of GDP in 1996, down from 68 per cent in the previous year.

He predicted that foreign exchange reserves to remain unchanged "at five months of Morocco's services and goods imports in 1997." Morocco's reserves are estimated at 37.5 billion dirhams, bank Al Maghrib (central bank) recently said.

Mr. Kabbaj also confirmed that "expenditure of redeemable and floating state debt" was at nearly the same level of 32.5 billion dirhams in 1997/98 against 32.6 billion dirhams in 1996/97.

Morocco's GDP is estimated at 316 billion dirhams in 1996, the minister said.

The state budget will be effective from July 1, 1997 but it should be adopted first by the 333-seat parliament before end of June, officials said.

The Moroccan authorities changed the fiscal year to run from July-June instead of January-December in a referendum in 1996.

REUTERS REUTERS

The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	ITL	FRF	ESP	PTA
US Dollar	1.7282	0.6049	1.4400	114.48	1.3882	1688.50	1.9448	5.8340	
DE Mark	0.5784	1.0000	0.3487	63.33	0.8029	977.39	1.1252	3.3748	
GB Sterling	1.5533	2.8585	1.0000	153.48	2.2951	2793.40	3.2144	9.6424	
CH Franc	0.6844	119.96	0.4196	1.0000	79.47	0.9634	1772.78	135.00	4.0483
JP Yen	0.0087	1.5092	0.5278	1.2573	1.0000	1.2120	14.76	169.77	5.0934
CA Dollar	0.7204	1.2563	0.4421	1.0448	1.21	1.233.19	1.4132	4.2417	
IT Lira	0.0008	1.0221	0.3574	0.0482	1478.63	0.8206	11.49	3.4488	
NL Guilder	0.5142	88.82	0.3107	74.06	58.83	0.7134	168.34	2.9981	
FR Franc	0.1714	0.2063	0.1038	24.8472	19.60	0.2373	33.32	33.3200	

Middle Eastern Currencies									
Currency	USD	JOD	SAR	BHD	KWD	AED	ILP	EGP	
US Dollar	1.0000	0.7080	3.7503	0.3770	0.2834	0.3625	1.6727	1335.50	3.3895
Jordan Dinar	1.4124	1.0000	5.2970	0.5326	0.4140	0.4273	1.6174	2168.79	4.7074
GB Sterling	0.2868	0.1888	1.0781	0.1005	0.077	0.0807	0.98	409.43	0.9038
Bahrain Dinar	2.85	1.8781	1.0000	1.0000	0.96	0.8024	9.74	4073.18	8.9911
Qatar Dinar	0.2747	0.1945	1.0304	1.0304	0.8531	1.01	421.86	0.9312	
Kuwait Dinar	3.3058	2.3405	12.3977	1.2462	12.03	12.14	5076.03	0.9312	
Emirates Dinar	0.2723	0.1928	1.0211	0.1028	0.8910	0.8924	418.08	0.9312	
Lebanese/1000	0.65	0.4611	2.4424	0.2405	2.3704	0.1970	2.3918	2.2074	
Egyptian	0.2580	0.2089	1.1065	0.1112	1.0739	0.0882	1.0836	453.02	

Energy									
Oil	East	West	North	South	Central	Asia	Europe	Japan	
Brent	17.65	17.80							
W. Texas	18.75	18.70							
Bonny	17.85	17.80							
Dubai	16.80	16.73							
UL Gas	181.00	179.00							

Mid-East Currencies									
Currency	USD	JOD	SAR	BHD	KWD	AED	ILP	EGP	
SA Riyal	0.2688	0.4612	0.10128	0.38420	0.38420	0.38420	0.38420	0.38420	
AE Dirham	0.2723	0.47094	0.1047	0.39239	0.39239	0.39239	0.39239	0.39239	
KW Dinar	3.3058	5.7155	1.9996	4.76417	4.76417	4.76417	4.76417	4.76417	
BH Dinar	0.3770	4.58716	1.60462	3.82263	3.82263	3.82263	3.82263	3.82263	
CY Pound	1.9462	3.3622	1.170	2.8023	2.8023	2.8023	2.8023	2.8023	

Metal Prices									
Metal	Gold	Silver	Platinum	AL (3 Months)	CU (3 Months)	Zinc (3 Months)	Lead (3 Months)	Ni (3 Months)	
Gold (oz's)	338.1	338.6							
Silver (oz's)	4.74	4.76							
Platinum (oz's)	419	424							
AL (3 Months)	1580	1583							
CU (3 Months)	2582	2587							
Zinc (3 Months)	1400	1403							
Lead (3 Months)	822	825							
Ni (3 Months)	7230	7250							

Currency Deposit Rates (Bid)									
Currency	1 Month	3 Months	6 Months	9 Months	12 Months	18 Months	24 Months	36 Months	48 Months
USD	5.88	5.80	5.69	5.85	5.91				
GBP	6.50	6.60	6.69	6.87	7.16				
JPY	0.43	0.40	0.50	0.58	0.59				
DEM	3.00	2.88	3.08	3.12	3.17				
FRF	3.12	3.28	3.37	3.40	3.42				
CHF	1.06	1.22	1.21	1.43	1.31				
ITL	8.79	6.88	6.66	6.53	6.39				

Main Equity Indices									
Index	Value	Change	Value	Change	Value	Change	Value	Change	Value
New York	DOW JONES	7793.35	17.84	0.23	7799.23	7777.96	7777.96		
New York	S&P 500	898.7	0.71	0.08	899.47	897.98	897.98		
London	FT-SE 100	4828	-28.7	-0.82	4872.1	4619.9	4653.7		
Tokyo	NIKKEI 225	20385.34	-122.31	-0.8	20578	20358.5	20507.9		
Paris	CAC 40	2753.79	16.1	0.59	2764.36	2716.05	2739.88		
Frankfurt	DAX	3768.27	39	1.04	3798.94	3779.51	3748.27		

Energy									
Commodity	Unit	Spot	Delivery	Unit	Spot	Delivery	Unit	Spot	Delivery
Coffee (c/b)	198		Spot						
Cocoa (\$/ton)	1658		Spot						
Sugar (\$/ton)	329		Spot						
Wheat (\$/ton)	144		Spot						
Soy (\$/ton)	22.84		Spot						
Tea (kg/kg)	138		Spot						
Barley (\$/ton)	0		Spot						
Rice (\$/ton)	480		Spot						

JOD Cross Rates									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	ITL	FRF	ESP	PTA
US Dollar	0.708	0.710							
GB Sterling	1.139	1.148							
DE Mark	0.4082	0.4102							
CH Franc	0.4083	0.4097							
FR Franc	0.121	0.1216							
JP Yen	0.8228	0.8269							
NL Guilder	0.363	0.3648							
IT Lira	0.4168	0.4189							

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Daily eat

A review of news from the Arabic press

Fariz: Foreign exchange reserves at Central Bank reach \$950m

THE NET foreign exchange reserves at the Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ) have reached \$950 million as of June 18, 1997 compared to \$697 million at the end of the 1996, CBJ Governor Ziyad Fariz revealed Thursday. As such, he said, the Central Bank will continue the monetary policy which aims at consolidating the dinar exchange rate by maintaining a rewarding interest spread on dinar assets against dollar assets.

The governor said that the interest on the dinar is three percentage points higher than the interest on the dollar but he pointed out that another factor that makes the dinar attractive is the higher and continued progress towards convertibility to other currencies.

The financial inflows have risen noticeably during the first four months of this year and have reflected positively on the overall situation of the balance of payments and on the increase in foreign exchange reserves.

The inflows were evident in exports rising by 8.2 per cent, expatriates' remittances increasing by about 16 per cent, tourism income growing by six per cent and foreign investments expanding by nearly \$70 million.

Dr. Fariz pointed out that the local cash liquidity achieved a 3.7 per cent growth during the first five months of this year. He expected the rate to rise further until the end of this year to reach about eight per cent for the whole of 1997 within the limits of no more than four per cent inflation rate.

Meanwhile, sources at the CBJ said that the latest issue of certificates of deposit was oversubscribed 2.8 times as it reached JD139.8 million. Of this amount, JD74.5 million went for purchases of three-month certificates and JD65.3 million for buying six-month certificates. As for the return, the interest on the financial instruments for three months edged down from 9.25 per cent annually to 8.85 per cent whereas the interest on those for six months dropped from 9.5 per cent to 9.05 per cent (Al Ra'i + Al Dustour).

Non-Jordanian activity at AFM rises during first half of June

NON-JORDANIAN purchases of shares totalled JD11.7 million during the first half of this month compared to purchases totalling JD11.6 million during the whole month of May. Arab purchases amounted to JD6.4 million of the non-Jordanian buying volume, Amman Financial Market (AFM) statistics have showed.

The total value of shares purchased by non-Jordanians since the beginning of 1997 until mid-June has reached JD35.9 million. This intense buying was supported by foreign institutional investors, international funds in addition to Arab investors. The statistics showed that 87 foreign pension funds are active in trading at the AFM whereas a total of 116 Arab funds and companies are also active.

The net investment by non-Jordanians from the beginning of 1997 until mid-June has reached JD25.9 million, while non-Jordanian net investments for the whole 1996 was a mere JD8.5 million.

U.S. grants Jordan \$4.5 million for water projects, population and family health programmes

By Ghaila Alul
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Jordan and the United States Thursday signed two agreements which stipulate that the Kingdom receive \$3.5 million in grants for water sector projects, and \$1 million for population and family health programmes.

The first grant, which is part of a \$44.5 million of U.S. assistance for the water sector in Jordan, supports Jordan's waste water treatment projects, assures greater efficiency in water use and improves the functioning of water institutions. U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Director in Jordan Lewis Lucke told the Jordan Times after signing the agreement with Minister of Planning Rima Khalaf and U.S. Ambassador to Jordan Wesley Egan.

Under the agreement, the U.S. will support the Ministry of Water and Irrigation, the Water Authority of Jordan and the Jordan Valley Authority to strengthen management, develop new policy approaches, and improve water quality monitoring systems.

According to a statement made available to the Jordan Times, some of the funds provided by the new agreement will help construct a new waste water treatment plant at Wadi Mousa.

"USAID anticipates providing approximately \$21 million for the proposed Wadi Mousa facility, which should not only increase the supply of water available for agriculture use in the area but also help protect the 'Water Heritage Site' at Petra," the statement said.

Mr. Lucke said that

although this grant will not support the Greater Amman water and waste water management project, "it is our firm intention to work with our Jordanian colleagues to assure the availability of funds for priorities like this project."

The Greater Amman project, on which the bidding is expected to commence this summer, will handle the management of water distribution, the provision of water and waste water services as well as the rehabilitation of water treatment system in the Greater Amman region.

The statement said that a number of activities have already been funded under the latest initiative, including the emergency improvements at Al Samra waste water treatment plant officially inaugurated in May. It added that the USAID contributed \$12



Planning Minister Rima Khalaf (right) and U.S. Ambassador Wesley Egan (centre) sign the two agreements Thursday at the Ministry of Planning

million in grant funds for Al Samra facility, which serves the entire Greater Amman area and substantially improves the quality of water available for agriculture.

"Continued degradation and depletion of scarce water resources represent serious obstacles to the future growth prospects of Jordan. Better water management and more efficient water use in the agricultural, industrial and domestic

use sectors would go long way toward ensuring that Jordan derives the maximum benefit from its scarce water resources. The projects supported by these USAID funded grants are positive steps towards achieving these goals," the statement said.

The second \$1 million grant agreement, comes in addition to \$9 million in previous grants and is part of an ongoing six-year \$20 million programme to sup-

port population and family health programmes in Jordan.

According to the statement, the programme aims at meeting the substantial unmet demand for family planning services in Jordan. It added that the U.S. funds will be used to strengthen Jordan's ability to maintain and build upon the important gains made in maternal and child health care during recent years.

Australia introduces new business visa

CANBERRA (R) — The Australian government has said it would introduce a new visa category aimed at encouraging immigrants to set up business in regional areas.

Immigration Minister Philip Ruddock said the new visas would give permanent residency to people already on a long-stay temporary business visa who had successfully owned and managed a business outside major cities.

"The benefits of business migration are very substantial," Mr. Ruddock said in parliament.

"It's brought considerable investment to Australia — we know that the average business migrant employs 4.5 people within two years of arrival — and it brings a range of business and entrepreneurial skills which will help grow Australia," he added.

It was the second loosening of immigration criteria

in the past week.

On Friday, Mr. Ruddock announced the creation of a new visa category for people who were allowed to stay in Australia as long-term temporary residents for humanitarian reasons.

The new arrangements applied to about 8,000 people from Sri Lanka, Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, China and countries from the former Yugoslavia region who had remained here for many years because of conflict in their home countries.

"All entered Australia legally and have remained in Australia on humanitarian grounds, approved by the former (Labour) government," Mr. Ruddock said in a statement. "The new visa offers further temporary stay to these people with the availability of permanent residence after they have been in Australia for 10 years."

Trading at AFM increases by 79.6%

AMMAN (J.T.) — Local buying at the Amman Financial Market (AFM) raised the volume of trade from JD4.9 million to JD8.8 million last week through 2,782 contracts and an index of 159.02 points.

The previous 73.5 per cent decline in the volume of trade was replaced with a 79.6 per cent rise for an increase of JD3.9 million.

The banking sector came in first place as 1,999,319 shares worth JD6.02 million were traded over 907 contracts (68.5 per cent of the volume of trade).

According to brokers at the AFM, foreign buying appears to be on hold and, as such, local interest in industry shares buyers was in purchasing 651,216 shares worth JD2.3 million (25.1 per cent of the AFM pie) through 867 contracts.

The service sector came in third place as 74,703 shares worth JD540,000 were traded in 181 contracts.

In the insurance sector, nine contracts covered 16,688 shares worth JD30,588.

Comparing the share prices of 90 companies, prices of 26 companies increased, 15 held steady and 49 went down.

UAE central bank wants foreign investment in stocks

ABU DHABI (AFP) — The United Arab Emirates (UAE) central bank has proposed allowing foreigners to trade in local shares in a departure from the long-standing policy of national monopoly.

The central bank made the recommendation to the federal cabinet along with a draft law governing the operations of the planned official stock exchange, Central Bank Governor Sultan Al Suweidi said.

"We have recommended to the federal cabinet that expatriates be permitted to trade in shares in line with the existing corporate laws, which allow foreign investors to own up to 49 per cent of the project," Mr. Suweidi told AFP.

"It is the viewpoint of the central bank, which believes this will attract capital. It is now up to the cabinet to decide on the matter," he said.

Foreigners are not allowed to trade in UAE shares and this has combined with the absence of an official exchange and a tendency for long-term investment to keep dealing at one of the lowest levels in the region.

But in a landmark move last week, the Emirates Bank International (EBI) announced the creation of the Gulf country's first fund to admit expatriates

after it was granted approval by the central bank.

Foreigners can own up to 20 per cent of the shares of the Emirates Equity Fund and bankers expect similar projects to be announced by other commercial banks.

Stockbrokers interpreted such a move as a prelude for agreement by the authorities to give limited access for foreigners to the local stock market.

Mr. Suweidi said the central bank had finalised a draft law and it has been under discussion by the cabinet. He cited what he called varying views among cabinet members for the delay in the project.

"The cabinet is still debating the project. It has not reached a decision yet because there is divergence in opinions," he said.

"I do not know when the exchange would be set up. I can only say that it has been approved in principle but some cabinet members want more studies," he added.

The UAE has planned to open a stock exchange for more than a decade but the project was held up by disparity in corporate laws in the seven emirates making up the oil-rich UAE. Officials, however, have reported the gap has

been bridged and only technical and procedural matters remained to be tackled.

Economists said a formal floor would attract savings, activate dealing and curb manipulation that has scared off small investors.

It is also needed to link up with other Gulf exchanges as part of their 1983 economic pact which stipulates the creation of a common market.

"It is time to establish a stock exchange," Mr. Suweidi said. "It will regulate share-dealing, attract investments and support the domestic economy."

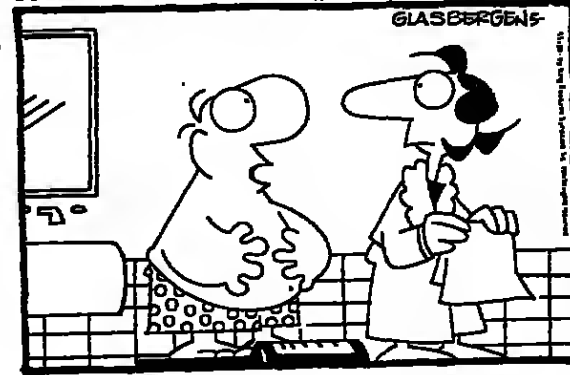
Dealing in the UAE is conducted by telephone through a handful of authorised stock-brokers, who often complain about widespread malpractices, including insider-trading as listed institutions issue only annual results.

Around 40 banks and companies trade their shares in the local market, with their capitalisation exceeding 60 billion dirhams (\$16.3 billion) at the end of 1996, according to stock-brokers.

The shares of key trading institutions are tracked by an unofficial index set up by the government-controlled National Bank of Abu Dhabi in 1989 with a base of 1,000 points.

THE BETTER HALF.

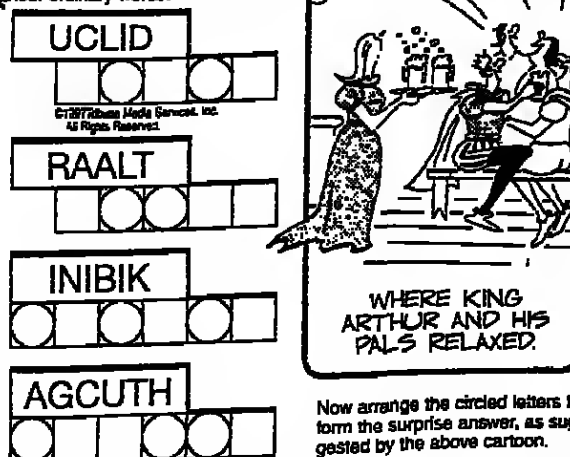
By Glasbergen



"Of course I'm bigger—everything grows in the spring!"

JUMBLE

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.



Answer: AT "A" (Answers tomorrow)

Yesterday's Jumbles: PATCH HASTY RATHER DEPUTY
Answer: What elastic will do for an expanding waistline — STRETCH THE TIGHTS!

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Global stars add spark to women's NBA

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — Chinese giant Zheng Haixia, Japanese sharpshooter Mikiko Hagiwara and Australian guard Michelle Timms lead 15 global stars set for the birth of the Women's National Basketball Association.

The league debuts here Saturday when the New York Liberty, paced by U.S. Olympic star Rebecca Lobo, visit the Los Angeles Sparks, led by centers Lisa Leslie and Zheng, who averaged 18.1 points at the 1996 Olympics.

"She symbolizes herself, China and Asia," Chinese National Team coach Zhu Jiazhi said. "Not only will the American people watch her, the whole world will see her play. She is determined to show her skill in the WNBA."

The Sparks are joined in the Western Conference by the Phoenix Mercury, Utah Starzz and Sacramento Monarchs. In the East, the Cleveland Rockers, Houston Comets and Charlotte Sting join the Liberty.

Each plays 28 games over 10 weeks with a championship game set for August 30. Other opening-night games feature Houston at Cleveland and Sacramento at Utah.

Timms, who helped Australia to Atlanta Olympic bronze, and Germany's Marlies Askamp were teammates for 1996 European champion BTV Wuppertal and are reunited at Phoenix.

Hagiwara adds firepower to the Sacramento Monarchs. She averaged 21.8 points a game last season to win a fourth consecutive Japanese scoring title, making 47 per cent of her three-point shots.

France's Isabelle Fijalkowski and Czech star Eva Nemcova led French club Bourges to this year's European Crown and are reunited in Cleveland.

"The advantage is they know one another. In terms of playing together, they have an instinct developed," Cleveland coach Linda Hill-MacDonald said.

Nemcova is excited to play alongside Fijalkowski again. "We can pass to each other wherever on the court," Nemcova said.

"She is very physical and she gets a lot of rebounds. She's a great player."

Joining the global contingent are Britain's Andrea Congreaves at Charlotte, Brazil's Janeth Arcain and Italy's Catarina Pollini with Houston, New Zealand's Megan Compain and Russia's Elena Baranova with Utah and Congo's Mwadi Mabika in Los Angeles.

Other international players include Yugoslavians Jasmina Perazic-gipe of New York and Milica Vukadinovic of Charlotte and Poland's Eliza Sokolowska at Sacramento.

The NBA has backed the league with experienced front office personnel and each team provides NBA owners with off-season arena date bookings.

Television and sponsor deals, helped greatly by NBA connections have allowed the WNBA to pay several top players substantial salaries but kept the remainder of rosters at a lower level.

This compares to the U.S. rival American Basketball League, which has more players making a slightly larger wage despite smaller markets for clubs and no television exposure.

Both the WNBA and ABL are one entity leagues such as major league soccer, meaning teams are stocked by the league and expenses are kept to a minimum. The ABL plays during the traditional October-March U.S. hoop season.

"I don't want them to bomb," ABL president Gary Cavalli said of his richer rival. "If they do, people will say women's basketball can't succeed (in the United States) even with the NBA's support."

ABL players are barred from playing for any other teams while WNBA players can and will play for other squads worldwide.

The ABL averaged 3,500 fans a game. The WNBA hopes for 4,000 a game and has put the NBA hype-marketing machine in full gear to lure spectators.

Brazil play ugly but beat Colombia in Copa America

SANTA CRUZ, Bolivia (R) — Brazil disappointed their fans when they used defensive tactics to beat Colombia 2-0 in their final Copa America group game on Thursday.

Coach Mario Zagallo admitted after the game that he had imposed a more cautious system upon his team for the game against talented but young and inexperienced opponents.

Afterwards he said candidly: "I would rather play ugly football and win than play attractive football and lose."

Colombia, often playing attractively, enjoyed long periods of possession but had trouble breaking down a Brazil side that retreated into their own half en masse every time their opponents had the ball.

"You can play well one day ... And badly another day, but the important thing is the victory," Zagallo said.

He was jeered by the large Brazilian contingent in the crowd in Santa Cruz during the match but was unrepentant afterwards.

"Today we played a different way. We were more compact in our defensive system because we were up against a team that has a high technical level and which can easily have an opposing defence chasing shadows," he said.

He also caused consterna-



Brazil's star striker Romario is tackled by Colombia's Luis Zuleta during their first round Copa America match against Colombia. Brazil won 2-0 and advances to the second round. Colombia qualified as one of the two best third placed teams and will face Bolivia in La Paz (Reuters photo)

tion by substituting striker Ronaldo, considered the world's best player, after 60 minutes. Ronaldo looked far from happy and went straight to the dressing room but Zagallo denied there had been a rebellion.

"No player is irreplaceable. Sometimes we have to mix up the team," he explained. Goals by Dunga and Edmundo in each half made sure that Brazil finished top of Group C with maximum points in a game which followed Mexico's 1-1 draw with Costa Rica in the competition's only sea level venue.

Mexico finished second and Colombia third, but the Colombians still went through as the second of the third-placed teams after finishing with more goals scored than Uruguay, which was third in Group B.

Thursday's results meant that Brazil now face a tough quarter-final with Paraguay, led by volatile goalkeeper Jose Luis Chilavert, on Sunday.

Mexico travel to Cochabamba at 2,600 metres above sea level to play Ecuador Sunday, while Colombia have only 48 hours before taking on the hosts in La Paz at 3,600 metres altitude. The short time given to teams to adapt to the high altitude venues has caused much criticism.

"Obviously, in this venue Bolivia are clear favourites," said Colombia worried coach Hernan Dario Gomez.

Mexico's goal, a penalty by Luis Hernandez, was the real 2000th goal in the history of the Copa America.

On Wednesday, Julio Cesar Baldivieso had scored what was widely reported to be the 2,000th goal in Bolivia's 1-0 win over Venezuela, but the South American Football

Confederation announced Thursday that had been only the 1,999th.

Hernandez, top scorer in the competition with five goals, received a trophy after the game to prove he really had scored the 2,000th goal.

The altitude crisis involving Argentina, who threatened to go home because of an alteration in the rules which could have sent them to La Paz for their quarter-final but eventually did not, had barely died down when another blew up.

Coach Daniel Passarella received reports that Chile are planning to switch their world cup qualifying game at home to his team to the northern desert city of Calama — which is 2,600 metres high.

"If this happens, we will be the ugly ducklings," said a bemused Passarella. "None of their other matches have been there."

Czech tennis finds freedom has its price

PRAGUE (R) — The fall of Communism may have brought new opportunities to the Czech Republic, but as one of the world's top tennis nations is learning, new-found liberties come at a price.

The Czech Tennis Association (CTS), which over the years has produced the likes of Ivan Lendl and Martina Navratilova, is cutting costs because it has been contending with financial problems that threaten the future of the sport in the country.

If the situation does not improve, say some, the Czech Republic may wait a long time before it sees another of its compatriots crowned as a grand slam winner.

"We are one of the world's top countries in tennis, and to stay at this level is very financially demanding," warned CTS official Frantisek Pala.

The task at hand is daunting: Replacing a state-supported tennis programme that over the past 25 years has produced such great players as Navratilova, Lendl, Helena Sukova, Hana Mandlikova and Jana Novotna.

Even current women's world number one Martina Hingis, competing for Switzerland, got her start in the system. Communist support brought Czech players 35 Grand Slam titles, three Olympic medals and wins in the Davis and Federation cups.

But Czech tennis is now finding that money rules. Unlike other former Soviet bloc countries, financial backing was rarely a problem for the sport here before Communism fell in 1989.

While many Eastern bloc governments saw tennis as a decadent Western sport and gave it little or no support, Czech authorities funded the game as part of its Olympic programme.

"There is some tension in the tennis community because we have to count every crown," said CTS director of coaching Frantisek Zlesak. "We have to be more careful with our money."

The problem came to a head late last year when local carmaker Skoda, which had been the main sponsor of previous Czech opens, announced that it would abandon the tournament due to commitments at the world ice hockey championships, which were held at the same time.

Ladislav Drozda, head of sponsorship at Intercom Praha, a marketing research company that works with Skoda, said one consideration was that tennis is currently the third most popular sport here behind soccer and hockey.

Last year, Czech tennis star Petr Korda participated in a German tournament rather than in the Czech open because

German officials had offered him more money.

Zlesak reported a 20 per cent drop in sponsorship money from 1996 to 1997, and said that while the government has picked up some of the slack — covering one-third of the association's operating costs last year and half its costs this year — it is barely enough to keep the system running.

Instead of devoting valuable time to improving the system, many CTS officials are now forced to spend hours scouring travel agencies for better deals for accommodation and cheaper plane tickets for juniors going abroad.

But that is the least troubling effect on junior tennis. The CTS is now sending less money to regional associations — a move that officials believe is shaking the country's tennis programme to its very core.

"We used to have our own psychologist and nutritionist," said Petr Hutka, president of Prerov Tennis Club.

"But now we don't have money for extra care. Still, what I see as the most serious problem is that training centres for young players have been closed. Children would train there from the time they were 10 until they were 15. Then they would join our club. Now that the centres have closed, we admit players as young as 13 to our club," he said.

"Nonetheless, there is a real danger that our youngest talent is slipping through the cracks."

Zlesak said the problem can be addressed in part by recruiting top-notch coaches, but conceded that tennis officials are in a bind.

In Communist Czechoslovakia, controls over travel documents and foreign work permits regulated the number of coaches leaving the country, keeping the "brain drain" on coaching to a minimum.

And the competition for funding for coaches and player development, Zlesak said, does not end on the court.

"It's not just sports associations that need backing, but also theatre troupes, film clubs and other organisations. And there aren't enough big companies here to support everyone's interests," he said.

With new possibilities open at every corner, youths who once could only turn to "accepted" activities such as tennis are now inundated with myriad opportunities to occupy their free time, further clouding the sport's future.

"The world of sport is not conservative," Drozda said on the question of sponsorship in coming years. "New sports such as skateboarding are becoming popular among young people, so it is difficult to predict the future of tennis."

Seles trails as rain stops play; Zvereva loses

EASTBOURNE, England (AFP) — Defending champion Monica Seles had dropped the first set in her quarter-final against big-hitting Dutch player Brenda Schultz at the WTA event here on Thursday when renewed rain stopped play for the day.

Seles, who had led 5-2 in the first set, found herself trailing 5-7, 2-2 when the players returned from the centre-court to the locker-room.

On an outside court Nathalie Tauziat of France was also one set down and trailed Natasha Zvereva of Belarus 4-6.

Play in the other quarter-finals between second-seeded Jana Novotna of the Czech Republic and Ai Sugiyama of Japan, and fourth-seeded Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario of Spain and sixth-seed Irina Spirlea of Romania had not started.

Weather permitting, organisers planned to play all of the quarter-finals and then the semi-finals on Friday. The final is scheduled for Saturday.

Old guard aim to give Christie winning farewell

MUNICH, Germany (AFP) — The British men's team spearheaded by veterans Roger Black and Colin Jackson hope to give Captain Linford Christie a winning send-off here this weekend in the European Cup final for the Bruno Zauli Trophy.

The British, who broke the stranglehold of the former East German Democratic Republic and Russia to become the first team apart from those two to take the title in 1989, have finished runners-up on the last five occasions — four of those to this year's hosts Germany.

The 37-year-old Christie, the former world and Olympic 100 metres champion, has said that this really is his last hurrah in the British vest which he has carried to seven successive 100 metres triumphs in the European Cup, four 200 metres titles and three relays.

Christie, who announced his premature retirement twice last year, will lead from the front this weekend in the 100m and 200m but has declined to run in the relay — the event he has failed in twice dropping the baton.

He can expect wholehearted support from his fellow veterans Black, in the 400 metres, and the 110 metres hurdles World Record Holder Jackson — though both were contentious choices for the team.

The 31-year-old Black, slated to take over the captaincy after Christie's retirement, is being pursued by a whole pack of young and promising 400 metre runners including world indoor silver medalist Jamie Baulch while Jackson, 30, was fortunate to get the nod ahead of perennial rival Tony Jarrett who has been in good form on the Grand Prix circuit.

The greatest problem confronting British athletics is where the next generation of Christie's and Jackson's is coming from.

Apart from the 400 metre event the rest of the cupboard looks bare — hardly surprising when one considers that each member of the German team is

subsidised this weekend to the tune of 1,500 pounds (\$2,250) while the British team receive nothing.

While Jonathan Edwards, Britain's triple jump world record holder, looks assured of taking that title the British will be hoping that some young talent bursts through and progresses to Athens for the World Athletics Championships in August.

The 24-year-old 800 metres runner Mark Sesay will hope he is one of them as he attempts to rebuild his reputation after persistent shin splint problems cut off a glorious junior career.

Sesay, who had his splints cured at the University of Alabama, was handed the unenviable tag of being the new Sebastian Coe when he ran the fastest ever 800 metres by a British junior and took the scalp of indoor world record holder Wilson Kipketer, albeit before the Kenyan born naturalised Dane was at his peak.

Sesay, who cut two seconds off his personal best in May to 1min 46.03 seconds, refuses to believe the coe hype — particularly the second time round.

"Let's face it I have only run 1 min 46 secs and that is nowhere near seh's 1 min 41 secs so comparisons on that level are a little bit wide of the mark," Sesay said.

Elsewhere in the men's competition there should be an excellent 1,500 metres where 1992 Olympic champion Fermin Cacho takes on the former dual world indoor 3,000 metres runner Gennaro Di Napoli of Italy.

In the women's event, last year's 800m and 1,500m Olympic champion Svetlana Masterkova of Russia has declined to go preferring to continue her training for Athens.

But France's Marie Jose Perec, who initially looked set to miss the event, might come at the last minute. The French Athletics Federation would only say on Thursday that either 200m and 400m Olympic champion Perec or Christine Arron would line up in the 200m.

There will be several women with interesting pasts and some with potentially lucrative future's competing this weekend.

Grit Breuer, last in the world indoor 400 metres in March, continues her rehabilitation after twice being banned for drugs, the first for allegedly tampering with her sample and the second time a three year ban for using clenbuterol.

Russia, who finished runners-up to Germany last time in Madrid, head their list with the venerable Yekaterina Podkopayeva, who was 45 on June 11.

Podkopayeva, ranked number one over 1,500 metres in 1994, became the oldest world indoor champion ever when she overhauled the 38-year-old American Mary Slaney in the 1,500 metres in March and continues her remarkable career against seven other competitors but may find Britain's Kelly Holmes a formidable obstacle.

The 27-year-old Holmes, a corporal in the British Army, was a dual medalist at the world outdoors in Gothenburg in 1995 but could only make fourth in the 800 at the Olympics last year.

Podkopayeva might be the Grande Dame of the meeting but Sally Gunnell is probably the most notable competitor as she uses this as a launching pad for reclaiming her outdoor 400 metre hurdles title in Athens in August.

The 30-year-old former world record holder, who had to sit out the last outdoor world championships and watch him hatter take her title and her world record, showed a return to form with second in Moscow on June 9 and more significantly ran her best time of the season 55.30 seconds.

Gunnell, though, will be doing well if her team can improve on their sixth place in Madrid last year, particularly after veteran shot putter Judy Oakes and 400 metres relay runner Phyllis Smith pulled out over lack of funding from lottery money, and relegation from the elite could be a distinct possibility.

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PHILADELPHIA "2"

Diane Keaton, Goldie Hawn & Bette Midler ... in

• THE FIRST WIVES CLUB • BALTO

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Adel Imam, Shireen & Saeed Saleh ... in

BAKHIT WA ADILEH (P.2) (AL JARDAL WAL KANKAH)

Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30

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CONCORD

CONCORD "1" Tom Cruise...in

JERRY MAGUIRE

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CONCORD "2"

Michael Jordan...in

SPACEJAM

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The actors are on annual leave The theatre will reopen July 2, 1997



His Royal Highness Prince Mire'd Ben Ra'd hands first place trophy to Dan Tully at the conclusion of the Jordan Open Golf Championship (photo by Roufan Nahhas)

Tully captures Jordan Golf Open

By Roufan Nahhas
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Dan Tully overcame sweltering heat and took first place scoring 133 in 8th Jordan Men's Golf Open Championship which started Thursday at the Bisbarat Golf Club near Amman National Park.

Rasheed Akl of Lebanon came second with 140 and T. Lee with 150 was third place in the two-day tournament.

His Royal Highness Prince Mire'd Ben Ra'd presented the winners with prizes at the end of the competition.

Around 35 participants of different nationalities including only six Jordanians competed over 36 holes in the event restricted to amateur players.

In the low handicapped category, B.S. Seo came in first place with 130, followed by D. Keegan in second place with 131 while John Rafter scored 141 to finish third place.

In the high handicapped category, J.M. Kim took first place with 133, R. Dia was second with 134 and

first time player Moutamed came third.

Tully a veteran player in the club said that course is a challenge to all players.

"I consider the Bisbarat Course as one of the most challenging courses in the world," he told the Jordan Times.

"It is somehow a little different from playing on grass," he added. "The atmosphere is great and we all feel as one family."

"We would like to see more young Jordanians playing golf," John Rafter told the Jordan Times.

Noting that the game needs more Jordanians on the course, he made a friendly gesture towards giving Jordanians a taste of golf.

"Tully and I are ready to give free lessons to any Jordanian who wants to experience golf," he said. "He will have to pay for golf balls only which costs around JD 3."

The club is planning to encourage Jordanians interested in playing golf offering a special rate which they can not refuse.

"We are targeting Jordanians under-21 to contact the club and enjoy an hour of golf under the supervision of professionals," Nasri Atalla, club secretary told the Jordan Times.

However, a new member in the club David Burns, pointed out that it is not easy to play golf without the grass.

"Sometimes a player can get so confused looking at the course when everything looks so brown," he said.

Suleiman Dajani a club veteran said that water is mostly the main problem.

"Lack of water is our main problem as it takes a lot to keep the golf course green," Dajani explained.

The Bisbarat Golf Club was established in 1990 with mostly foreigners registered as members.

The club holds several tournaments throughout the year — mostly exclusive to its members.

The course comprises nine holes with 18 tees. Its rolling hill location with a par of 68, it is considered one of the most challenging courses in the Middle East.

Security stepped up at Wimbledon

LONDON (R) — Security at this year's Grand Slam tennis tournament at Wimbledon is being stepped up, the All-England Club confirmed on Thursday, with officials and police eager to avoid a repeat of April's grand national chaos.

"Security has been increased and the Grand National was taken into account."

"We liaise very closely with police on these matters," an All-England spokesman said.

A bomb scare bailed April's Grand National steeplechase. The race was postponed for two days.

The spokesman confirmed that two car parks would be moved to create a "sterile" area of around 200 metres along one of the main roads, but he stressed that the changes would not hugely inconvenience spectators.

"We're not sending spectators off to the middle of nowhere," he said, estimating that people using the car parks, previously situated on the golf course, would have to walk a further 400 metres.

Visitors using public transport or other car parks would not be affected.

All bags will be searched when spectators enter the grounds and all vehicles will be checked as part of the increased security measures.

In addition, closed circuit television cameras with recording equipment will scan the concourse.

"The safety of all our visitors is of paramount importance," Christopher Goringe, chief executive of the club said in a statement.

The championships, which start on Monday, are expected to attract around 400,000 visitors over the two weeks.

Italy's Serie A sides allowed more non-EU players

ROME (R) — The Italian Soccer Federation decided at a meeting on Thursday to allow Serie A clubs to have five non-European Union players on their books next season rather than the three permitted now.

However, Juventus managing director Antonio Giraudo told reporters that the clubs, who were divided on an issue opposed by the players' and coaches' unions, would not be allowed to have more than three non-EU players on the field.

"We did not argue but struggled, yes," added Roma president Franco Sensi after the meeting.

"This is an intermediate solution."

Several Serie A clubs, including Inter and Milan, have already lined up five non-EU players for next season and would have been forced to sell some without the change.

Other clubs wanted limits to be entirely abandoned while unions argued that Italian players would find it increasingly hard to secure jobs outside the lower divisions.

The new measure was a compromise and was for a one-year period when the situation will be reassessed.

"We could not have everything," said Sensi. "The interests of those clubs who have already bought were looked after

and now they will not be forced to sell."

Piacenza, who staved off relegation in a playoff, are the sole Serie A side to employ only Italian players.

The issue has aroused some strong feelings in Italy, with one senator calling on the government this week to act to "put a limit on the excesses" of non-EU players.

(Prime Minister Romano) Prodi and (Deputy PM Walter) Veltroni cannot stand still in the face of the stupidity of our soccer," said Popular Party Senator Severino Lavagnini.

The European transfer market has been blown wide open by the ground-

breaking Bosman ruling of December 1995 which allowed free movement across Europe for EU players.

Since the start of the last season, Italians have also seen increasing numbers of their top players — such as Gianfranco Zola and Fabrizio Ravanelli — moving to foreign clubs, particularly high-paying English teams.

In March, soccer's world governing body FIFA changed its transfer rules to ensure equal treatment for all players moving between clubs within the European Union.

Fans flocked to interleague games

NEW YORK (R) — The first round of interleague games is in the record books and the experiment, offensive as it may have been to baseball purists, was apparently a bit with most fans.

Baseball officials announced Thursday that the first segment of regular season games ever played between American and National League teams provided a significant attendance boost for Major League baseball.

The seven-day period covering 84 games averaged 34,922 fans per contest, an average attendance 35.4 per cent higher than the pre-interleague average of 25,851.

Those figures were significantly higher in cities where obvious rivalries created playoff-like excitement among fans.

The "subway series" between the New York Mets and New York Yankees attracted 168,719 fans, the largest three-game series crowd at Yankee stadium since the house that Ruth built was refurbished in 1976.

The Chicago White Sox failed to sell out the opener of a three-game series with the cross-town rival Chicago Cubs on a day when much of the city was focusing on a celebration of the Bulls NBA championship. But the White Sox drew a club-record 44,249 fans for the second game of the series at Comiskey Park.

The Seattle Mariners set a club attendance record for four consecutive dates when 208,297 came to back-to-back two-game series with the Colorado Rockies and Los Angeles Dodgers.

American League teams went a combined 48-36 in the first round of play.

The next round of interleague games is from June 30 to July 3. The schedule that week includes a world series rematch between the Yankees and Atlanta Braves and a series between the two teams from the Bay Area, the Oakland Athletics and San Francisco Giants.



Colorado Rockies' Roger Bailey is thrown out at home as San Diego Padres' catcher John Flaherty takes the throw in the fifth inning. Bailey tried to score on a fly ball by Ellis Burks (Reuters photo)

In preparation for Pan-Arab Games Syria beats Jordan in first friendly match

By Aileen Bannayan
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The Syrian women's national basketball team Friday overcame their Jordanian counterparts 61-43 in the first of the three friendly matches both teams will play as part of their preparations for the Pan-Arab Games scheduled to begin in Beirut July 12-27.

The Syrian team totally dominated the pace of the match attended by a sparse crowd and basketball officials of both teams eyeing their teams' form as an indicator of their preparedness for the Games.

In addition to Jordan and Syria, Lebanon, Egypt and Tunisia will contest the women's basketball event at the games.

The Jordanian team seemed to lack effective teamwork and committed many turnovers leading to easy scoring chances for the guests who won the first half 33-21.

Although Jordan improved in the second half the Syrian team dominated rebounds under both boards

and limited Jordan's scoring by bampering the movement of the team's energetic playmaker Hala Muheisen.

The Kingdom's team also lacked concentration in free throws but managed to narrow the gap at times through scoring by Rana Hussein and Tala Al Mauge.

The Jordanian team, playing the first of friendly matches since being regrouped two months ago displayed the ill-effects of lack of match practice since players already represent the best of the three teams in the country — hence the need to host teams from abroad to gain match experience prior to competitions.

Onlookers noted that the team did not appear in its usual form mainly because they were playing with the pressure of being evaluated for competition in less than two weeks.

The women's national team, absent from the Arab and international scenes for 12 years made history by becoming the first Arab women's team to take part

in the Asian Basketball Championship in 1995.

The junior national team also took part in the Asian competition of their own last year. However, the national team came back to square one when the Jordan Basketball Federation (JBF) decided not to take part in the 17th Asian championship in Bangkok, Thailand in April.

The team had been training for four months and stopped again feeling that the JBF was not entirely committed to the women's team.

"During the past two years, Jordan became a well-known name in Asian basketball circles. It was finally on the map on women's basketball. Cancelling participation was definitely a step in the wrong direction," Asian Basketball Confederation

Vice-Chairman and former JBF head Awad Haddad had noted.

Jordan was ranked third in this year's Asian competition and withdrawing this time means Jordan will have to secure qualification to take part in any future championship.

The national team includes Rana Hussein, Rana Dajani, Hala Muheisen, Sira Nagbaway, Hala Ghattas, Lubna Masri, Luma Abu Judum, Tetyana Qardan, Tamara Khadra, Indira Qasesieh, Hind Gbouri, Hala Khalaf, Tala Al Mauge, Zina Farah, Jumana Sali, currently studying in the U.S., will be joining the team next week.

The Syrian women's and men's teams will play two more matches each at the Sports Palace at 5 p.m. and 7 p.m Saturday and Sunday.

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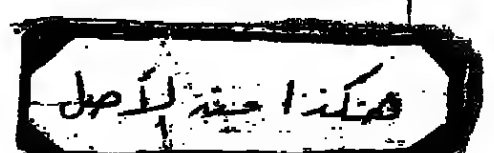
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U.S. wants help from Belgrade on alleged arms flight on way to Libya

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) — The United States wants more help from Belgrade about the crash of a Russian jet suspected of ferrying arms to Libya in violation of U.N. sanctions, Western diplomats said here Thursday.

Polish Ambassador Zbigniew Wlosowicz told AFP that the United States Thursday showed a video to the U.N. sanctions committee relating to the crash of a Russian Ilyushin-76 aircraft

after takeoff from Belgrade on August 19 last year.

He said the 15-member committee took note of the information in the video comprising television reports of the incident, and asked him to inform Serbian Ambassador Vladislav Jovanovic that the session had taken place.

Western diplomats said that the U.S. delegation wanted Mr. Wlosowicz to press the Belgrade ambassador for more information

about the crash, but others such as China, Egypt and Russia objected to such a move. The sanctions committee, which comprises all 15 U.N. Security Council members, works according to consensus.

The United States delegation said that Washington had so far failed to obtain sufficient clarification from Belgrade about the incident, according to the diplomats.

The plane crashed on its way to Valletta, Malta,

killing all 12 people on board. Washington suspects that the arms on board were destined for Tripoli.

Serbia has denied any involvement.

Libya has been under an international arms and air embargo since 1992 for its refusal to extradite to Britain or the United States two suspects in the 1988 bombing of a Pan Am Aircraft over Lockerbie, Scotland, that killed 270 people.

Sharon poised to take finance minister's job

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Hardline right-winger Ariel Sharon looked set Friday to replace resigning Finance Minister Dan Meridor despite the deep concern his appointment would provoke in economic circles.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is waiting only for the consent of another possible candidate for the powerful post, former Justice Minister Yaakov Neeman, before giving Mr. Sharon the nod, Mr. Netanyahu aides said.

However, a close associate of Mr. Sharon told Agence France Presse (AFP) that "it is not all tied up yet, because he himself is thinking twice before taking the post."

Mr. Meridor, a popular moderate, resigned Wednesday after Mr. Netanyahu forced a monetary reform proposal through the cabinet despite the minister's opposition.

Guidon Esbet, economic commentator with the Yediot Aharanot newspaper, said appointing the hawkish Mr. Sharon as Meridor's replacement would be unpopular with Israeli businessmen.

"This prospect worries industrialists, more because of Sharon's political positions and his opposition to peace with the Palestinians than his strictly economic views," Mr. Esbet said.

For Israeli businessmen, "the real issue is political, because without a peace process there will be no growth," Mr. Esbet added.

The mass-circulation daily Haaretz headlined its

front page "especially not Sharon," reflecting the widespread concern.

Mr. Sharon's appointment would mark a clear shift towards the far-right for a government already embroiled in a crisis over the deadlock in the Palestinian peace process.

The head of the hard right wing of Mr. Netanyahu's Likud Party, Mr. Sharon is an outspoken opponent of the Oslo peace accords with the Palestinians and a strong supporter of expanding Jewish settlements in Arab areas — the main cause of the current crisis.

If he is appointed, the 69-year-old retired general will find himself coming in from the cold after 14 years on the sidelines of government.

He was forced out of the defence minister's job in 1983 after the massacres of Palestinians in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in Lebanon by militias allied to Israel.

Since then he has occupied various ministerial posts — currently as head of a National Infrastructure Ministry — but never one as important as the finance job.

"He has a reputation for being a bulldozer who mows down all obstacles in his path and never hesitates to overstep his budgets by a long way" to encourage Jewish settlement building, Mr. Esbet said.

However "he has been keeping a low profile in the past year" to avoid angering the economic circles with which he had a lot of contact, he added.

Mr. Netanyahu tried to keep Mr. Sharon out of his cabinet when he took power last year, apparently mindful of his new government's image, but relations between the two men have since improved.

Mr. Sharon has a strong power base among Likud activists, nationalist settlers and ultra-orthodox religious circles.

His possible rival for the finance minister's job, Yaakov Neeman, is a lawyer who is also close to the religious right-wing and settlers.

Mr. Neeman was forced to resign as justice minister last year because of legal proceedings against him on perjury and obstruction of justice charges. But his acquittal in May opened the way for a possible return to government.

Mr. Netanyahu's handling of the Meridor affair, widely seen as a deliberate move to force a rival out of the cabinet, has provoked criticism of his autocratic style and his fractious coalition faces difficult days ahead.

Parliament will vote Tuesday on a motion of no-confidence submitted by the Labour opposition, and two of Netanyahu's allies have threatened to pull out of the coalition and force early elections.

Two opinion polls published in Israeli newspapers Friday showed that most Israelis want early elections and the majority would vote for Labour leader Ehud Barak.

(See story on page 1)

Iran invites Iraq to Islamic summit

TEHRAN (AP) — Iran has invited its longstanding enemy Iraq to an Islamic summit to be held in the Iranian capital in December. Tehran Radio reported Friday.

It said Health Minister Ali Reza Mirindi, who arrived in Iraq Thursday on a previously unannounced visit, handed over the invitation for the Organisation of the Islamic Conference summit to Foreign Minister Mohammad Saeed Sahhaf.

Mr. Mirindi also invited Mr. Sahhaf to visit Iran and bold talks with his Iranian counterpart Ali Akbar Velayati. It was not clear whether Mr. Mirindi will meet President Saddam Hussein during his stay in Baghdad, the Iraqi capital.

Iran's outgoing President Hashemi Rafsanjani has said that he intends to invite Mr. Saddam to the summit.

The two Muslim neighbours have had tense relations since their 1980-88 war, which ended with a U.N.-brokered ceasefire. The two countries never signed a peace treaty.



MINUTES BEFORE THE BULLETS FLOW: Police restrain Liu Wei, one of 14 convicted drug traffickers as their immediate execution is announced Thursday at a public rally in a Beijing sports stadium. China reported Friday the execution of another 15 people for drug offences, bringing the total number of traffickers shot in the past few days to more than 100 (AFP photo)

Turkish president to talk to Yilmaz; premiership at stake

ANKARA (AFP) — Turkish President Suleyman Demirel was due to meet opposition chief Mesut Yilmaz later Friday, his press service said, following the resignation two days ago of the prime minister.

In a statement, Mr. Demirel's press office said the meeting would take place at 5:00 p.m. The two had also met late Thursday.

The statement did not say if Mr. Yilmaz, who heads the conservative Motherland Party, would be asked to form a new government or if the meeting was simply a consultation exercise.

Sources close to the party

said they did not expect Mr. Yilmaz to be asked to form a government, but that he may still be handed the job if he suggested a convincing coalition.

His conservative rival Tansu Ciller, leader of the True Path Party, remains favourite to be the new premier. She has the full support of the main Islamist Party, Welfare, led by outgoing Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan.

Ms. Ciller was Turkey's first woman prime minister between June 1993 and March last year.

Mr. Erbakan's resignation Wednesday ended a turbu-

lent 12-month term, including major rifts with the pro-secular military, outraged at the pro-Islamist drift of his government.

Traditionally the president appoints the leader of the party with the most seats in parliament as prime minister. Currently, that is Mr. Erbakan, but Mr. Yilmaz can boast the second highest number of seats.

Mr. Yilmaz said Thursday after his first meeting with Mr. Demirel that he was ready to form a coalition government excluding Welfare.

(See story on page 1)

Egyptian women breach male bastion for a smoke

CAIRO (AFP) — A growing number of Egyptian women have penetrated Cairo's traditionally male-only cafes to puff away at argilehs, preferably with molasses-flavoured tobacco.

Young Egyptian women have become a fixture in the teen-age Al-Husseini neighbourhood of Cairo where they smoke their shisha, Egyptian for argilah, hookah or waterpipe, despite the stares of passersby.

"Our society looks down on girls who smoke cigarettes in the street, but we couldn't care less about the criticism we face when we smoke a shisha with friends," said Nahla, puffing away at the Waley Al-Naam cafe.

"Girls smoke shishas less than men but it is a fun way to spend a few hours with friends," added Nahla, a university student who declined to give her last name.

Abdel Gayed Emara, spokesman for the Egyptian health ministry, confirmed that "an astonishing number of women have taken a liking to smoking shishas," although he was unable to provide figures.

He said that the favourite tobacco at Al-Husseini cafes is definitely the honey-flavoured moassal.

"The annual consumption of moassal per inhabitant has gone from 15 kilograms to 20 kilograms," Mr. Emara said.

Shisha smokers have also increased in Egypt and number 830,000 people, or 12 per cent of all tobacco smokers, burning up 16,000 tonnes of moassal per year, Mr. Emara

said. The hookah was brought from Syria to Egypt in 1601 and quickly became fashionable among the Mameluk and Ottoman aristocracy, but by the start of this century, the elite were puffing away on cigarettes.

From then on the shisha became the common man's pastime.

The waterpipe has a long flexible tube that passes through a container of flavoured water which cools the smoke that is drawn through it.

New shisha adepts among the young, like newlywed Dina, prefer it to cigarettes, claiming it is "less harmful" to smoke. But not so, said Mr. Emara.

"That is utterly wrong. The cigarette filter does as much to reduce nicotine content as the water in the shisha. On the other hand, since the shisha tube is long, smokers must puff harder and tire their hearts more," he said.

Meanwhile cafe owners like Khaled Ragab voice contempt at women shisha smokers.

"They are trying to show men that they are not inferior to them. Some have even picked up our secrets and demand that we provide them with coal embers so as not to burn up the tobacco too quickly," Mr. Ragab said.

Egypt's state-run Eastern Tobacco Company which produces 90 per cent of the moassal for local consumption is building a new factory for moassal export, as demand grows in Arab countries.

Arab-Americans look to be better understood

WASHINGTON (AFP) — When the Federal building in Oklahoma City blew up and a TWA jetliner crashed over New York, many Americans pointed the finger at the Arab community.

But it now seems certain there was no Arab link whatsoever to either tragedy. Timothy McVeigh, a former model U.S. soldier, was found guilty of the Oklahoma City bombing and the TWA crash appears to have been the result of a mechanical failure.

But Arab-Americans continue to fight stereotypes and bias, and are increasingly organising themselves to gain political clout.

That was the theme of a recent conference of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee here entitled "organising is power."

The U.S. media was a favourite target, accused by the group of siding with Israel and providing one-sided coverage of the Middle East.

"Arabs and Muslims are extremely misunderstood" and often treated with suspicion, said Hala Maqsood, who is originally from Lebanon and now heads the committee.

She cited the 228 complaints of discrimination her group tallied following the 1995 bombing of the Federal building in Oklahoma City. Another flood of complaints predictably came in the wake of the crash of TWA flight 800 last July, which prompted

authorities to scout for Arab-looking airline passengers.

Discrimination continues even though there are now three million Arab-Americans in the United States and six million Muslims.

Ms. Maqsood said that Arab-Americans need to organise themselves just as other U.S. minority groups have. "If we don't, it's as if we don't exist in America," she said.

She noted that many Arab-Americans have the built-in advantage of being affluent and highly educated.

Khalil Jahshan, president of the National Association of Arab-Americans, said his group has attempted to put some balance in U.S. foreign policy toward the Middle East.

That policy, he said, has been "too dominated by domestic considerations" and by the "pro-Israeli lobby."

Yet, he noted that the Arab-American community has been in the U.S. for more than a century and that a majority of its members are Christian. More than two-thirds of Arab-Americans were born in the America.

Mr. Jahshan said that to raise their profile Arab-Americans will be trying to gain more electoral representation. Currently the group is represented by seven members of Congress.

But he knows it will be a long haul. "It takes a generation to get involved," he said.

Lebanese TV captures Arab viewers, thanks to satellite

DUBAI (AFP) — From the mountains of impoverished Yemen to the deserts of oil-rich Saudi Arabia, Lebanese TV and the attractive women who host the shows are flavour of the month in the conservative Arabian peninsula.

Since they started to broadcast on the satellite ArabSat in September, the private stations Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation (LBC) and Future TV have swept aside their regional and international competitors in the ratings.

Game-shows, music, dance and relatively scantily-clad women are the simple formula for success in a region where TV debates can drag on for hours and women in veils are a common sight.

"The women who present the shows are so beautiful. It's the way they speak that makes me think they're talking to me alone," said Mohammad Awadi, a 35-year-old Kuwaiti government employee.

At their meeting places known as Diwanias where Mr. Awadi and his friends talk politics or play cards every night, the television is always on LBC or Future TV.

"I can watch LBC all day without getting fed up. After two hours of Kuwaiti television, I can have a

nervous breakdown," said Jassem, a 24-year-old Kuwaiti merchant.

In Yemen, people watch TV while chewing qat, a herbal stimulant. "I watch the Lebanese stations to cry at my fate when I compare these beautiful women to my wife," said businessman Abdo Wahbani.

But not everybody is bappy, and prayer leaders in the mosques of Sanaa denounce the women on Lebanese TV for not covering up.

In Saudi Arabia, the most conservative state in the Gulf, a survey carried by the company Parc based in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) shows that LBC is at the top of the satellite TV ratings.

The highest viewing figures are in Mecca and Medina, which are home to Islam's holiest sites.

"People in Saudi Arabia have given up watching anything but the Lebanese channels," said a Lebanese businessman.

"One of my clients closes shop early so as not to miss a single show because they are broadcast live and he phones in," said a businessman just back from Riyadh.

One Saudi viewer got so carried away that he proposed marriage to the

Lebanese woman hosting the show.

Debates on pre-marital sex, censorship, superstition — all considered taboo subjects in the region — are widely followed but stir angry comments in newspaper columns.

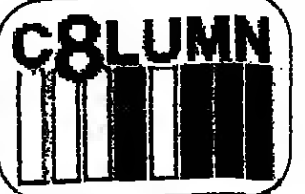
For Arab expatriates in the Gulf, the Lebanese stations are a godsend.

"Since we started picking up LTV and Future, we don't get bored at night anymore," said Nadim, a Lebanese engineer working on an oil project in the desert near Abu Dhabi.

But others are critical of what they call the mindless fare served up by the two satellite stations.

"It's as if they are out to make sure that nobody bothers to think anymore," said Mohammad Haddad, a Lebanese banker in the Emirates.

He also complained that the stations were not doing Lebanese women any favour. "Such shows are damaging to their reputation. A lot of young people in the Gulf now think Lebanese women are easy."



Taxpayers pay for Chinese rapist's bid to stay in Australia

PERTH, Australia (AFP) — Chinese rapist, Jia Le Geng, 32, has been granted funding from Australian taxpayers because he no longer has income, his lawyer Henry Christie, of the government-funded legal aid commission, said. Jia, who arrived in Australia six years ago, has been held in a detention centre at Perth airport since last week when Australian Immigration Minister Philip Ruddock decided to deport him. Christie said Jia was refused a bridging visa while he waits to challenge his deportation in court. "This is a complicated legal question, and it is considered an important point of principle whether a person should be deported or allowed to stay," Christie said. Jia was jailed for six and a half years in 1995 which included rape of a Chinese female student in Perth. He was released on parole in April, after serving 26 months, and granted a permanent resident's visa after the government's administrative appeals tribunal ruled his behaviour as in good character. Ruddock intervened in the case last week and cancelled the visa.

Roman Catholic priest had child sex videos

METZ, France (AFP) — Police seized several hundred child sex videos at the home of a Roman Catholic priest, in part of a nationwide anti-paedophile operation, officials said Friday. The priest was arrested in the eastern Moselle region on Tuesday. He was released pending further legal proceedings, but the material seized at his home was kept for further analysis. Most of the videos showed paedophile acts involving young boys, according to initial investigations. The nationwide "ADO 71" paedophile clampdown, launched in dawn raids across the country Tuesday, has led to the indictment of more than 200 suspects nationwide.

Transsexual wins female identity in Argentina, now seeks Congress seat

BUENOS AIRES (AFP) — Campaign posters call her "a woman who's different," but Mariela Munoz, a transsexual who just won legal recognition as a female, says her run for Congress is not about gender. "Evita (Peron) said 'I will return, and I will be millions,'" she said. "I want to be one of those millions and work for the poor," said Ms. Munoz, a candidate with the ruling Justicialist Party. "I know what it's like to be poor, I know what it is like to raise 17 kids and get by on my own." Ms. Munoz said, referring to her adopted children. The biological mothers of three of her children claimed she had no right to adopt as a woman, and though the court battles are not over, she said the fact she was legally recognised as a woman this year would help. But her ambitions are broader now, and her sights are firmly set on Congress. She said she planned to work hard "against discrimination against minorities, not just sexual ones."